SERMONS

ON

PRACTICAL AND IMPORTANT

SUBJECTS,

BY THE LATE

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TRIED AND CONVICTED FOR HIGH TREASON,

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ADVERTISEMENT.

SOME, if not all the following Sermons, were preached by their unfortunate author, in Taviſtock Chapel, Drury Lane, and committed to the preſs ſeveral years ago; but, from a variety of circumſtances, the publication has been delayed to this time. The fate of the author will render them an object of curioſity to ſome, and their intrinſic merit will probably recommend them to others; for whatever blame may have attached to the late conduct of the author, the candid part of mankind will find in theſe at leaſt ſomething to approve. They are plain and practical, and not deſtitute of many of the marks of good compoſition; the ſubjects are important and ſtriking; the ſentiments, in general, intereſting and forcible; and the ſtyle is vigorous and animated. Impreſſed with this opinion, the publiſher humbly hopes that they may render ſome ſervice, in the eye of the public, to the memory of the deceaſed; and alſo prove of ſome ultimate benefit to mankind.

12th May, 1795.

SERMON I.

St. Paul's Second Epiſtle to Timothy.
Chap. iv. Verſe 3.

For the time will come when they will not endure ſound doctrine; but after their own luſts ſhall heap to themſelves teachers, having itching ears.

THE truly learned and great author of this and other epiſtles, was ſelected in an eſpecial manner, to be the apoſtle and teacher of the gentile or heathen nations.

He had from his very infancy been bred up and inſtructed in all the cuſtoms of the moſt rigid ſect amongſt the Jews. Previous to his converſion he was both in principle and practice a moroſe ſour Phariſee. A man ſtrictly tenacious in the obſervance of every childiſh, ridiculous ceremony, which came recommended by the ſpecious pretence of tradition. Juſt in his dealings, reſerved in his carriage, very demure in his outward de-

portment, exact in the payment of tythes, a conſtant attendant on public worſhip, and particularly careful not to eat with unwaſhen hands.

The practice for many years of numberleſs ſimilar abſurdities, inſenſibly gave the apoſtle's mind that biaſs and prepoſſeſſion in favour of his own ſect, which would naturally render him wholly averſe to any ſyſtem however excellent, that by having an appearance of novelty, muſt interfere with thoſe rites handed down by his anceſtors for a ſeries of ages.

Upon this principle, St. Paul's extreme abhorrence of the fundamental doctrines of Chriſtianity is naturally accounted for. A religion, which inveighed againſt every ceremony that flowed not from a pious heart, could expect no favour from a man in whoſe creed the heart was not ſo much as hinted at.

To overcome and wholly eradicate theſe natural and acquired prejudices, the Redeemer of the world condeſcended to interfere in perſon.

Thus thoroughly convinced, and properly inſtructed, St. Paul was commiſſioned to preach unto

unto the Heathen nations the gospel of Jesus Christ. In this great work he became so eminently zealous, that he not only planted most of the Christian churches, but nurtured and watered them with the salutary doctrines delivered in various places, and on various occasions, throughout his different epistles.

So copiously hath this wonderful teacher handled almost every subject which it concerns us to become acquainted with, that a reference to his divine writings will *generally* clear up the doubts, and thoroughly satisfy the scruples of every humble and sincere Christian.

I say *generally*, because we have but too many melancholy proofs, that St. Paul's authority is foisted in as a foundation upon which to build a superstructure of materials, very opposite to those furnished by true genuine piety.

The spirit of rank enthusiasm visibly gains ground amongst the lower orders of both sexes. The vulgar, always apt to run into extremes, are either grosly profligate, or most egregiously misled.

Hence ariſe thoſe horrid, indecent, familiarities, which every *religious pretender* aſſumes to himſelf a right of uſing with the great author of nature; and this forſooth, becauſe he is in a ſtate of favour with the Deity.

Hence, inſtead of manly, fervent piety, flowing from an heart deeply ſmitten with a lively ſenſe of the divine perfections; we have rapturous flights of fancy, extacies, indwellings of the ſpirit, ſenſible feelings, by the help of which we can point out the very moment we were converted; and hence, inſtead of being guided by the ſober dictates of ſolid ſenſe and cool diſpaſſionate reaſon, we are daily peſtered with numberleſs perſons who commit the moſt abſurd follies, and utter the moſt abominable traſh, by the immediate influence of the Holy Ghoſt.

Nay the diſeaſe ends not here, for perſons poſſeſſed of ſuch admirable qualifications, muſt needs, in order that their talents ſhould not be wrapped up in a napkin, and the world loſe the benefits of their pious inſtructions, become teachers of others.

Hence

Hence the loweſt mechanic, to the neglect of his calling, by which he is enabled to provide ſubſiſtence for his family, commences an itinerant lay-preacher, as it is termed! He reaſons, argues, diſputes, objects, and confounds, to the admiration, as well as edification of an ignorant, gaping multitude. He even proves every propoſition, by a ſtring of quotations from the moſt truly eloquent Chriſtian writer the world ever produced.

Very ſtrange that a man poſſeſſed of a fine, natural genius, perfected by a great ſhare of learning, and an accurate knowledge of the human heart, as well as aſſiſted in every compoſition by the unerring ſpirit of truth, ſhould yet be made the father of ſuch groſs abſurdities, as ignorance, aided by gloom and melancholy, could only ſuggeſt!

St. Paul informs us, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world for no other purpoſe, but to ſave ſinners; that through his blood alone, if we live as perſons ought, who bear his name, we ſhall have peace here, and a joyful reſurrection to eternal life hereafter.

He

He further intimates, that by the *fall*, our faculties are ſo impaired, that nothing but God's aſſiſtance, added to our own concurring endeavours, can ſo far rectify them, as to enable us to perform ſuch things as are pleaſing in the ſight of God.

Thus far this is plain common ſenſe, and what every pious believer will moſt readily aſſent unto. Here, therefore, we join iſſue with theſe men.

But when we are all told, that becauſe St. Paul declares Abraham to have been juſtified by faith, and not works, that on this account we have nothing to do but *believe*, and leave the reſt to Chriſt. When we obſerve, that the term, *good works*, ſhocks the pious ears of theſe gentry, here we beg permiſſion to *diſſent*, and alledge as a reaſon, that the works St. Paul alludes to in the caſe of Abraham, are the works of the law; that he was writing to a people who had conceived ſo ſtrange a veneration for the Moſaic ritual, as to be very unwilling to deſiſt from practiſing the ceremonial part, although they received Chriſt as the Meſſias foretold by the Jewiſh prophets.

The

The apoſtle, therefore, labours with all the force of ſtrong reaſoning, to aboliſh this vain imagination.

For which purpoſe he declares, that as all the ceremonial part of the law was not from the beginning, neither was it deſigned for any other end, but by its typical nature, to lead us as a *ſchool-maſter* unto Chriſt. That conſequently, when he came in the fleſh, it having then fully anſwered the end of preſerving among a peculiar people the notion of a Redeemer, the practice of it was no longer neceſſary. That the Jewiſh ceremonies could never of themſelves be effectual to reinſtate us in the favor of God, the apoſtle proves, by a reference to Abraham, who ſo firmly relied upon the promiſes of God, that, contrary to all human appearance, he ſhould yet become the "father of many nations," and becauſe "the Redeemer ſhould be born of his ſeed;" that, therefore, through him all mankind ſhould be bleſſed; that by this belief which he had, being *uncircumciſed*, and his ſubſequent ſubmiſſion to the Divine Will, he was actually juſtified in the ſight of God, without the aſſiſtance of the ceremonial part of the law.

The

The apoſtle, therefore, aſſures the Romans, by way of inference, that as Abraham believed Jehovah, and became righteous, ſo if they have the ſame reliance upon the promiſes of Chriſt, and obſerve the ſame obedience to his commands, eternal happineſs ſhall be their portion; and of courſe, that the works of the law, or legal ceremonies, are by no means neceſſary to obtain ſo deſireable an end.

Thus we perceive how erroneous a method it is to make particular quotations from an author, without materially weighing the whole ſcope and tendency of his works.

Goſpel faith, if it hath any meaning, is ſuch a ſtrong conviction of the principles of Chriſtianity, that not the ſhadow of a doubt remains on the mind concerning their veracity.

Now it is but too poſſible for a man to poſſeſs a faith like this, and yet be greatly deficient in acts of piety or humanity. God forbid, that there ſhould be many inſtances of men who profeſs to *believe* in Jeſus, but in works deny him. One example of the kind is, however, enough for our purpoſe, and gives us great reaſon to aſk with

St.

St. James, this modeſt queſtion: Can *ſuch* a faith ſave a man? Our bleſſed Saviour gives a deciſive anſwer, by declaring, that many ſhall pretend at the day of judgment, to have performed wonderful works in his name; but neglecting to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, or diſtribute to the indigent, he will ſcorn to acknowledge them as his ſervants.

Be not therefore, my brethren, on any account deceived, he only who doeth righteouſneſs is righteous: recollect that the foundation for all your hopes is Jeſus Chriſt; avoid both ſubtle and trifling diſquiſitions, where in ſquabbling about words, we but too often loſe the things for which we contend.

The goſpel of Chriſt, and conditions which it behoveth us to perform, are plain and ſufficiently ſimple.

The frailty, indeed, of human nature is ſuch, that an excellent heart, led egregiouſly aſtray by a very weak head, is but too common a ſight.

Was this not the caſe, the nonſenſe uttered by our enthuſiaſts, could never paſs current upon any number of perſons for ſacred truths.

Becauſe

Becauſe St. Paul ſubmitted all his natural and acquired endowments, and made them ſubſervient to his maſter's ſervice, our itinerant gentry muſt forſooth rejoice in never having had any accompliſhments, natural or acquired, and therefore they glory in their weakneſſes.

On a ſimilar account, becauſe the prophet in declaring the bleſſed effects of the coming of the Meſſias, foretells, that the people ſhall all be taught of God, our modern fanatics refuſe every aſſiſtance from human letters or the ſciences; theſe they rudely villify, under the appellation of *carnal weapons*—they it ſeems deal in nothing but Spirit.

This is ſo ſenſeleſs an error, that was it not propagated with but too much ſucceſs, it would be beneath contempt.

Learning can never be employed to half ſo good a purpoſe, as when exerted in the defence, illuſtration, and ſupport of Chriſtianity. Nay, it is the peculiar boaſt of this ſyſtem, that the more it is examined by the light the ſciences afford, the readier and more heartily will it be embraced. Of this, our own as well as other European nations afford ample proof; ſince the greateſt literary men have always

always been the moſt ſincere Chriſtians, and that not owing to the prejudice of education, but becauſe as ſuch perſons were properly qualified, ſo after an impartial examination, they have yielded to the force of conviction.

According, however, to my apprehenſion, the moſt dangerous error broached by our fanatics is, that of "ſenſible feelings that their ſins are pardoned." This alſo they pick up from St. Paul, where he ſays, the Spirit beareth witneſs with our ſpirit, that we *are* the children of God.

Here they roundly affirm, that the moment they believe, they feel themſelves pardoned, and ſo long as they continue in this ſtate of juſtification, (which ſome * of their party have affirmed they *never* can forfeit) ſo long the Holy Ghoſt works upon their ſouls by ſenſible impreſſions.

This is giving the greateſt ſcope for a wanton and licentious imagination to ſpend itſelf in a thouſand idle reveries.

If the animal ſpirits flow quick, and the blood circulates freely, this may very eaſily be miſtaken, for

* Vide Weſley's Works.

for a more than ordinary effuſion of the Spirit. On the other hand, ſhould a man, through illneſs, or one of the many evils this life abounds with, be brought into a low habit of body, here ſuppoſing himſelf deſerted by the great Father of Spirits, he may become an eaſy prey to all the horrors of religious deſpair.

Thus we may perceive what a wretched foundation for our faith and hope, in matters of the greateſt importance, is that which can be ſhaken by ſuch trifling contingencies. A gloomy day ſhall blaſt the fair proſpect of years, and inſtead of glorious certainties, high-fluſhed hopes, and * rapturous communications with the Deity, ſhall lead the mind into an endleſs labyrinth of perplexing fears, and add to the tormenting anguiſh of an aching heart.

But bleſſed be the Almighty Saviour, altho' too too many have in our days literally fulfilled the apoſtle's prophecy, by ſelecting to themſelves teachers who, for purpoſes eaſily gueſſed, ſooth and flatter their dangerous deluſions; although multitudes amongſt us cannot endure ſound doctrine; yet,

* Vide Trenchard's Natural Hiſtory of Superſtition in Gordon's Tracts.

yet, for ever adored be his Holy Name, for having left us clouds of witneſſes to oppoſe this deſtructive perverſion of the truth.

The apoſtles are continually exhorting us, from a conſideration of the ſhortneſs of human life, as well as precarious tenure of every worldly bleſſing, to crowd into our narrow ſpace as great a number of actions beneficial to our fellow-creatures as poſſible. We are called upon to be willing on every occaſion to ſerve ſuch as need; and our adorable Redeemer, without entering into a long diſſertation between faith and works, without marking the difference between *inherent* or *imputed* righteouſneſs, (a theme that has been by ſome modern writers ſpun out into * volumes,) without ſo much as touching upon the faith which juſtifies, and the faith which ſanctifies, commands us with a ſimplicity that always characterizes the doctrine of Chriſt, if we really love *him*, to evince our affection by keeping his commandments; and beſeeches us, in the language of tenderneſs, to love one another.

As if he had ſaid, " My deareſt diſciples, as I am now about to leave this world, and ſhall

* Hervey's Theron and Aſpaſio.

ſhall very ſoon have anſwered the end for which I came into it, it is both proper and neceſſary that I ſhould give you ſome rules, which if you follow with ſincerity, you will not only continue high in my favour and eſteem, but alſo obtain, by my interceſſion, the greateſt happineſs the Father can beſtow, even eternal life." I cannot afford you a ſtronger proof of my ſincere affection and earneſt deſire to ſee you happy, than by moſt chearfully laying down even my life for your ſakes. You, on your parts declare, that highly ſenſible of ſo diſtinguiſhing a favour, you are in gratitude bound to love me. Now there is but one way by which I ſhall ever believe this love to be real and not affected, and that is, if you endeavour to the utmoſt of your abilities to *keep my commandments.* The only commandment, therefore, as I have no intention to puzzle or miſlead you, is, that you ſhould love one another as *I* have loved you. Follow but this rule, and it will always be the greateſt happineſs of your lives to go about doing good. Let but this charity or general affection to mankind, to the juſt as well as the unjuſt, to your enemies as well as friends, Let but this, I ſay, be your prevailing temper, and your principles will then become ſo like unto mine, that I ſhall never look upon you as my

ſervants;

ſervants; your implicit obedience to my commands will not only give you an indiſpenſible right to my favour and protection, but ſtill more, I ſhall always view you in the light of my beſt beloved, and moſt affectionate friends." *

Here, my brethren, you perceive inſtructions worthy the great lover of mankind to deliver. Here you have no unintelligible jargon, all is plain, rational, and conciſe. The doctrine is alſo ſo agreeable to the principles of reaſon, as to admit corroborating proofs from an accurate enquiry into the laws of nature and conſtitution of the univerſe.

For if God is truly the quinteſſence of love and benignity, he could have no other motive for creating an innumerable multitude of beings but their happineſs; and of courſe, to preſerve or increaſe this happineſs, muſt be the grand object of his providential care and attention. The ſupreme good then of the whole world of rationals, is the thing the Deity as a beneficent being muſt wiſh to promote. It is therefore moſt manifeſtly our duty to lend an aid, as it were to forward and perfect this gracious

* St. John, chap. xv, ver. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

cious plan, by exerting every means in our power to heighten the felicity of our fellow-creatures. When through viciouſneſs, or a ſupine indolence, we neglect putting this neceſſary rule in practice, we act not in concert with the Deity, and rather (as far as our limited powers permit) fruſtrate his merciful intentions.

However bleſt in externals, we find ourſelves wholly incapable of enjoying happineſs without the concurring aſſiſtance of others. We are therefore to preſume from the *ſameneſs* of human nature, that they cannot be happy without our aid. There is then a mutual tie upon us *all* to promote the welfare of the whole, in which our *own* welfare is alſo included as being a part of that whole; for no man can promote the good, whether temporal or eternal, of an whole, without promoting at the ſame time the good of *every part* of which that whole is compoſed *.

Thus we perceive that ſcripture, nature, and reaſon, all conſpire in compelling us to act as well as believe.

This

* Cumberland de legibus Naturæ, cap. 5.

This is what is ſo repeatedly inculcated in the divine writings, under the term Charity, which means not, according to vulgar acceptation, alms-giving, but that love [αγαπη] of human kind, which excites in us an ardent wiſh to ſee joy, peace, and happineſs, diffuſed over every countenance; that *philanthropy* which ſcorns to give an ingenuous, honeſt, although aching heart, the exquiſite pain of relating its woes, by contriving ſome ſecret, but effectual means of relieving them; that *humanity* ſo ſuperior to pride, that it cannot in all the world diſcover an inferior: it diſdains external poſſeſſions, it conſiders ſolely the man, and in him it diſcerns a creature, the offspring of one *common parent*, ſubject to one common evil, and a candidate for one and the ſame happineſs; hence it perceives a *brother*, and for Chriſt's ſake loves him with a brotherly kindneſs; it ſees alſo a fellow-traveller, and ſcorns to poſſeſs any thing which can make this tedious journey more agreeable, without inſiſting upon its friend and brother Chriſtian to partake of the repaſt; here *Vanity* is too paltry a principle to have any the ſmalleſt ſhare: no, it is the overflowings of an heart, grateful for the many unmerited bleſſings received from the bounteous Author of nature.

This, my friends, is the teſt of Chriſt's real diſciples.

Let us not, therefore, give heed to nonſenſical remarks, that this is expecting to be ſaved by *works:* the man whoſe heart is a ſtranger to the principle deſcribed above, is, I am confident, an utter ſtranger to the greateſt ornament Chriſtianity can boaſt, and not, I fear, qualified for that future ſtate, in which the only ties that can unite us, will be love to God and Chriſt as the head, and to each other as fellow-redeemed creatures.

In obedience, therefore, to our Lord's injunctions, let it be the grand aim of our lives to perform all the real ſervice we can for mankind.

However narrow or contracted the ſphere may be in which we move, it is nevertheleſs in the power of every perſon to contribute *ſomething* to the happineſs of another. To let, therefore, any occaſion ſlip, would be acting againſt ourſelves; for as pleaſure is the thing we all ſo eagerly graſp at, to loſe an opportunity of doing good, would be to barter away a real enjoyment.

It will not, I believe, be deemed an exaggeration to ſay, that this morning puts it in your power to do a ſingular act of kindneſs, by relieving the wants of a number of innocent, and therefore *worthy* objects.

I am ſent here a willing advocate for one hundred and twenty helpleſs orphans.

I ſhall not treſpaſs upon your patience, by a long, tedious diſſertation upon the nature, excellence, and utility of charity ſchools. This kingdom hourly feels the good effects of theſe inſtitutions. All, therefore, I ſhall preſume to add, is, that did your benevolence only ſerve to keep theſe indigent babes from mingling with the vile herd of thoſe abandoned wretches who infeſt the ſtreets of this metropolis, it would not be beſtowed in vain; but when it is conſidered, that you not only make them uſeful members to the community, but alſo cauſe them to be inſtructed in thoſe religious principles, the practice of which will render them acceptable unto God, a moſt powerful argument ariſes in their behalf.

As to their plea, they attempt not to urge any, but that the all wiſe Creator hath thought fit to

place them in ſuch a ſituation as to ſtand in abſolute need of your beneficence.

They alſo alledge the extreme precarioufneſs of worldly proſperity; they beg leave to aſſure you, that ſome of their anceſtors were by no means likely to produce an indigent race; that it may never be the caſe with any of your poſterity they moſt ardently wiſh; they however declare, that as by your kind inſtruction they are taught the knowledge of a Saviour, ſo ſhall it be their conſtant endeavours to increaſe this knowledge; and they are determined to intercede with him, that at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, your goodneſs to them may meet with a ſeven-fold reward in the world to come, where after a well ſpent life, they hope to meet and join with you in ſinging, bleſſing and honor, power and glory, be unto God, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.

Now to God the Father, &c.

SER-

SERMON II.

The abſolute neceſſity for the coming of Chriſt, and advantages reſulting to the world from his Advent, ſhewn in a Sermon, preached the Sunday before Chriſtmas day.

SERMON II.

St. Luke, Chap. ii. Ver. 32.

A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Iſrael.

A CERTAIN devout Jew of Jeruſalem, inſtructed by the Holy Ghoſt, that he ſhould not leave the world, until he had actually ſeen the Saviour of mankind, advances to the temple, to pay adoration unto the infant King of Heaven.

The character given of this man by our evangeliſt, is, that he was "waiting for the conſolation of Iſrael."

He perfectly well knew the real import and meaning of all the Jewiſh rites; was ſatisfied that they were only ſo many inſtructors or ſchoolmaſters, to lead the devout obſervers unto Chriſt, the true antitype to every ceremony.

Poſſeſſed

Poſſeſſed of ſuch an uſeful ſpecies of knowledge, wearied with the world, and enfeebled by extreme old age, the pious Simeon breathes out an ardent wiſh, that having ſeen the Lord of Glory, having viewed him whom Jehovah * ordained to be the ſalvation of his elect people, he might now be † permitted to recline his hoary head upon the peaceful lap of mother Earth!

The prophet, however, points out in the verſe we have ſelected for a text, ſome of the advantages which would reſult unto mankind, from the incarnation of the Son of God.

To the Gentiles he was to be a light to illumine their underſtandings; like a piercing ray, to diſpel that thick cloud of ignorance which overſpread their minds, and lead them out of the dark labyrinth of error into the gladſome region of ſun-ſhine and truth.

The eyes of the Jews he was to open, by teaching them the *true* ſenſe of all their prophecies, of all

* Eum quem ſervandis electis tuis deſtinaſti unde etiam factum ut vocetur Jeſus, quod nomen Simeon adumbrat. Beza.

† απολυεις. Dimittis, i. e. liberas, ex corpore videlicet mortis hujus ut loquitur D. Paulus. Beza.

all their various formalities, of all the inſtitutions handed down by their progenitors, time immemorial.

In ſhort, like ſome maſter-key, 'twas he alone who could unlock the multiform myſteries of the Providence of God.

That there was an abſolute neceſſity for ſuch a guide, that things were ſo circumſcribed both amongſt Jew and Gentile, at the time our Lord viſited us in great humility, as to render this neceſſity critical, will appear manifeſt, from a curſory ſurvey of the ſtate of the then known world.

The name Gentile was given by the Jews to all thoſe nations, however different their religious polity, who were ſtrangers to the God of Iſrael.

Immerſed in all the groſs ignorance of religious barbariſm, the Egyptians, in other reſpects a ſagacious people, worſhipped the Sun *, who in their theology is ſtiled the only God of Heaven, (μόνον ὐρανῦ θεὸν). In Egypt, he was adored under the name of Oſiris, at Heliopolis, under the ſymbol of

* Sandford, De deſcenſu Chriſti, lib. 1. ſect. 7. Voſſius, de Idol. lib. 2. cap. 5. Owen, Theolog. lib. 3. cap. 4. Macrob. Sat. Gale's Court of the Gentiles, part 1. Hutchinſon, vol. 2.

of Mnevis, a ſacred bull, and at Memphis, under the figure of Apis.

The ſame may be ſaid of the Phœnicians, Greeks, and Romans, who all adored the ſun, although under different appellations, and acknowledged a multitude of ſubordinate deities, whom they called Deaſtri, ſtar-gods, and demons.

The rites uſed in the Gentile mode of worſhip was, as may be ſuppoſed, ridiculouſly abſurd, and too frequently cruel and obſcene. Moſt nations offered *animal*, ſeveral proceeded to ſuch enormities as to ſlay *human* ſacrifices.

Their prayers, both with reſpect to the matter and the form, were wholly devoid of ſenſe, piety, or reaſon.

The prieſts of each reſpective country moſt groſly abuſed their authority, and wantonly deceived an ignorant, deluded, wretched people. Miracles, ſham-prodigies, and divinations, were craftily introduced, to diſpel the doubts, and impoſe upon the credulity of the vulgar. The conſequences reſulting from ſuch an erroneous ſyſtem of theology, were, that every ſpecies of vice and licen-

licentiouſneſs was practiſed with impunity. Infants were expoſed, ſuicide came recommended by the title of heroic virtue, luſts * the moſt unnatural, were publicly countenanced and encouraged, and the gods were ſuppoſed to remain idle, indifferent ſpectators, whilſt vice like a deluge overflowed the world.

Such was preciſely the ſtate of the Gentile or heathen nations, who were ignorant of the ſcriptures, and of the power of God. So critical was their ſituation, that it is not poſſible to conceive a time † in which they could be better prepared to receive with gladneſs the meſſenger whom God ſhould ſend to enlighten their minds, and call off their attention from worſhipping the creature to ſerve the true Creator of the world.

Nor

* Some of the graveſt Athenian matrons performed in public an action in honor of their gods, which diſhonors human nature, and of which a common proſtitute would be aſhamed. Had, therefore, Chriſtianity done nothing elſe but freed the Gentiles from the beaſtly ſervices they paid to their deities, it would have been a moſt ineſtimable bleſſing. Spearman's Letters on the Septuagint.

† There was no age of the world wherein mankind were ſo generally diſpoſed for the receiving of the goſpel, as that wherein our Saviour appeared. Tillotſon's Sermons, vol. 7, 8vo edition.

Nor was the ſtate of the Jewiſh, at the time our Lord appeared in the fleſh, much preferable to that of other nations. The purity of their religion was moſt horribly defaced by the Scribes and Phariſees, who encumbered it with a ſet of inſignificant traditions. They miſtook the means for the end, falſely ſuppoſed that there was ſome intrinſic excellence in ſacrifice, expected indeed a deliverer, but by no means ſuch an one as God in his mercy promiſed inſtead of a Saviour, who ſhould heal all *mental* maladies: inſtead of a divine phyſician for the ſoul, they dreamt about nothing but a formidable warlike prince, to break their chains aſunder, and releaſe them from a ſervile ſubjection to the Roman yoke.

Controverſies abounded amongſt them *, ſects multiplied, and religious ſquabbles begat mutual hatred, variances, and averſion.

Behold, then, a perſon aptly qualified to rectify every abuſe, both in faith and practice, which had crept into the world!

Intimately

* There were ſeven ſorts of Phariſees, two of Eſſenes, beſides Sadduces, Wiſemen, Aſſideans, Gaulonites, Herodians, and Samaritans. Some of theſe party names were firſt given them about thirty years before Chriſt. Vide Godwin's Moſes and Aaron.

Intimately acquainted with the nature of the human mind, each fibre of the heart expoſed to his inſpection, to him appertaineth the power of controlling the unruly will of man.

Liable through weakneſs to a variety of errors, the wiſeſt nations were guilty of the profoundeſt folly.

Inſtead, therefore, of celebrating the exploits of a Jupiter, inſtead of practiſing rites they were unable to explain, inſtead of being burdened with a load of ceremonies in themſelves trifling and abſurd, inſtead of this, the perſon deſigned to enlighten the Gentiles, taught them a ſyſtem of theology, the pureſt in its nature, moſt excellent in its origin, and beſt adapted to promote the nobleſt end.

The ſoul of man is created with an unlimited deſire and thirſt after knowledge. Hence are we naturally anxious to look backward as well as forward, to take in the whole ſcope of things, and become acquainted with every circumſtance that can in the ſmalleſt degree conduce to our well-being.

Mere

Mere human reaſon in this life is in its infant ſtate, requires the aſſiſtance of an inſtructor, and cannot of itſelf determine any thing concerning the great truths of religion *. The *light of nature* is a mere *ignis fatuus*, a term without a meaning; and they who argue againſt revelation, they who reject the perſon whoſe office it was to enlighten the world, ſuch men are ſingularly induſtrious to put us upon a much worſe footing than the brutes that periſh.

Loſt in the perplexing maze of error and miſtake, the thinking heathens † lived a life of miſery. They perceived themſelves *wrong*, but were unable

* For my own part, I can have no great veneration for the ſufficiency of reaſon, which in ſo many *thouſand* years could not find out what now every ſmatterer in philoſophy and divinity pretends to know, and to demonſtrate to a mathematic certainty. Vide Enquiry after Theology and Philoſophy.

† Plato in his ſecond Alcibiades introduces Socrates, ſaying, "that they muſt wait until a teacher come who ſhould "inſtruct them how to behave towards God and towards "man." Upon hearing which, Alcibiades cries out, Oh! when ſhall that time come Socrates? and who ſhall that teacher be? How greatly do I deſire to ſee that man who he is? See alſo, "Deiſm Revealed."

unable to diſcover a clue which might lead them to the *right*.

Senſible of having offended the deity, though willing to appeaſe his wrath, they yet were ignorant of the means: deſirous of acting up to the dignity of rational creatures, they felt the want of a law-giver, who might deliver a ſet of rules as a proper guide to their conduct.

No wonder, therefore, they welcomed the Meſſenger of Light; no wonder the eloquent, forcible language of truth, wrought powerfully upon their minds by its irreſiſtible charms; no wonder their oracles were dumb, their prieſts confounded, their temples deſerted, their philoſophers put to ſilence, and their images crumbled into duſt, the moment their minds were enlightened by the glorious Sun of Righteouſneſs.

Nor were the Jews, God's choſen people, leſs indebted for a variety of benefits received by the advent of Chriſt. They were hereby taught the true ſenſe of the ſacred books, were eaſed from the trouble of obſerving a multiform variety of ceremonies. Their miſtakes in expecting a merely temporal deliverer were corrected, and they were placed

placed in a ſituation moſt conducive to their eternal welfare.

Thus was our lord literally the glory of the Iſraelites, the moſt pleaſing object the God of nature could preſent unto their ſenſes, the moſt deſirable upon which their affections could be fixed.

But however great the bleſſings the antients reaped from the author of all comfort, it is yet a truth too important to be forgotten, that we moderns are under equal, if not ſuperior obligations to the King of heaven.

Even in this our iſland, Barbariſm once reared her frightful head; gloomy Superſtition taught her votaries ſervility and idolatry, the offspring of Ignorance fired the worſhippers with an enthuſiaſtic zeal *. At ſuch a juncture did it pleaſe the good Providence of God to permit the Roman arms to conquer our anceſtors, to render them civilized, and thus pave the way for the propagation of the Goſpel.

Beſides,

* Moſt tribes of the Celts acknowledged ſuch divinities, and attributed ſuch qualities to their gods as encreaſed the worſhippers' ferocity. Vide, Northern Antiquities.

Beſides, therefore, delivering them from the beggarly elements of heatheniſm, beſides opening their minds that they might underſtand the ſcriptures, *ſince* the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, many and various are the favours we have received from Jeſus, the Light of the World. To enumerate them all would be to tire the liſtening ear, and ſcatter the ſpirits of the moſt collected auditor. Take then, my friends, a ſhort ſummary of the whole: "Through the inſtruction of our incarnate God, "we only can become acquainted with thoſe eſ- "ſential articles neceſſary to further our eternal "felicity."

Truth, in certain points, is what the wiſeſt have been the moſt aſſiduous to diſcover.

It is impoſſible for a *thinking* man to live an hour without anxiouſly wiſhing to know the end for which he thus exiſts; the terms on which life is granted; the place whither he is poſting with ſuch ſilent celerity, and the treatment his immortal part may expect to meet with, when this fluttering heart ſhall beat no more.

Hence the religious cuſtoms of every nation have been fruitful in expedients to appeaſe the deity, but to us who were formerly Gentiles, the means of reconciliation are clearly revealed, ſince Chriſt by his advent hath brought life and immortality to light through the Goſpel.

The memory, the imagination, and the judgment, are the three leading powers in the ſoul of man.

The memory ſerves by way of record to treaſure up ſuch paſt occurrences as may be uſeful in future.

Our imagination is a ſource of pleaſing pleaſure; it is a kind of creative power, can call up images which afford delight; is our conſtant companion in the younger part of life; the foſtering nurſe of Hope; and even when diſtreſs approaches, is ever ready to beguile the tedious hours with a diverting tale.

The judgment is that ſober faculty which weighs and compares things in all their different relations; ſuſpends our venturing upon action until

ſtl it hath maturely conſidered the conſequence; gives things their proper preference, and finds a verdict in the awful court where Conſcience ſits as judge.

Theſe are the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic excellencies of man. Theſe the qualities which render him the maſter-piece of creation.

But unleſs well-lighted at Religion's torch, unleſs ſome hand divine point out their proper uſes, the ſportive fancy will be employed in Folly's ſervice, the Memory's viſage be blotted with foul ideas, and the chaſte judgment be debauched by paſſions of a blacker kind.

To guard againſt miſtakes ſo fatal, blundering man hath always a friendly teacher to whom he may apply for a ſolution of his difficulties. With the inſpired light for an inſtructor, and the holy ſpirit for a guide, the weary wanderer may be ſafely directed into the road that leadeth unto happineſs.

Beſides making ſatisfaction for our ſins, beſides pleading our cauſe with ſucceſs at the throne of

grace, the divine Immanuel commiſſioned Truth, an heavenly gueſt, to viſit this our earth.

As, therefore, ripening flowers open to the ſun, ſhe, like a blaze of light ſallies on the ſoul, illumines all her powers, expands her wiſhes, and, though incarcerated in fleſh, renders her almoſt a demi-god.

Some men, 'tis true, there are, who take every thing upon truſt, with whom nonſenſe paſſes for profound diſcernment, infidelity for wit, and a jargon of words for depth of penetration. They exalt human reaſon unto the ſkies, diſcard revelation as of little utility, and ſmile with ineffable contempt upon ſuch as are weak enough to believe.

But ſuch ſelf-taught philoſophers ſhould conſider, that it is owing to the knowledge they derive from the Bible, that they are capable of reaſoning with the leaſt degree of preciſion upon religious topics.

The moſt learned men have demonſtrated, that every nation received the firſt hints of arts, ſciences,

and letters, from the Jewiſh people. The Greeks attribute the invention of their alphabet to one Cadmus, who is proved, by inquiſitive perſons, to have been one of thoſe * Canaanites expelled by Joſhua, who ſettled firſt in Phœnicia, and afterwards tranſported himſelf with a colony of his countrymen into Greece, whither he carried all the knowledge he poſſeſſed in theology and literature. The moſt antient philoſophers, law givers, and poets, travelled into Egypt †, and converſed with the Jews. Hence in their works we meet with ſuch manifeſt traces of Jewiſh learning and opinions. In ſhort, oppoſers of the Bible act a moſt unfair part; they owe it every obligation for rendering them ſuperior to the ſavages abroad, and then moſt unthankfully endeavour to overturn its authority by weapons, *it only* teaches them how to wield.

We, however, who ſubſcribe not to this faſhionable opinion, we cannot but perceive the bleſſings

* Or Phœnicia. Vide, Bochart, Gale, Stillingfleet.

† Pythagoras ſpent twenty years in Babylon and Egypt. Plato is reported to have converſed for years with the Jews. Pherecydes (Pythagoras's maſter) was of Syrian or Phœnician extract. Orpheus, Linus, Homer, and Heſiod, were in Egypt.

bleſſings we reap from the advent of the divine hero, who was given to inſtruct mankind.

Light is one of the firſt principles of nature; the atoms of which it is compoſed are ſo extremely minute and ſubtile, that they eaſily pervade the pores of all bodies; it gives the power of viſion, affords the means of perception, it aſſiſts ſecretion, recruits the animal ſpirits, mixes with our blood, and is the chief cauſe of the circulation of that vital fluid. Chriſt, therefore, who is called by analogy the Light of the World, performs for our ſouls benefits ſimilar to thoſe our bodies receive from his emblem, the material light.

Nothing, therefore, remains, but that we ſhould be thankful for ſuch favours. I inſiſt not upon the performance of any particular duty, becauſe a grateful mind, ſenſible of obligations, will endeavour to make every return in the power of a creature.

As then the rude and indigeſted maſs of matter lay ſcattered o'er creation; as hideous darkneſs ſpread her thick veil over all the beauteous face of nature; as black confuſion reigned till the Almighty fiat

ſtat gave command that *light ſhould be*, and all was fair and good; ſo the benighted mind, groping in the paths of error, meets doubt and dark deſpair, till Chriſt, like a ray divine ſhot from the uncreated glory, deſcends to diſpel her gloom, and cheer her in the tedious road of life.

So ſoon to celebrate this wonderful condeſcenſion, any thing that hath a tendency to ſhow the great benefits conveyed unto the world by our Lord's incarnation, may not be wholly unacceptable. The interim we may employ in pleaſing meditation upon the love divine, which undertook ſo great a work.

Thus diſpoſed, curioſity will preſent to our imagination a night in which the wind forgot to blow, fearful to moleſt the infant king of glory. The air breathes ſilence—not a ſingle cloud beſpots the ſky—the ſtars like courtiers put on their beſt attire, and ſhine with double luſture in the birthnight of their Prince: Content ſits ſmiling on the ſhepherd's breaſt, and ſweet refreſhing ſlumber ſeals his wearied lids. Here and there, indeed, a playſome lamb gazes as if he wondered at the *ſolemn* ſcene. And now the eaſt, refulgent, glitters with a flood

a flood of light divine. When lo! a radiant hoſt congratulates us, highly-favoured mortals: Nature liſtens with attentive ears, whilſt ſoft melodious harmony attunes the ſoul to mental joys. But man can only raiſe his feeble voice and faintly join the band, can only ſing "we praiſe, bleſs, worſhip, and adore thee for thy moſt wonderful condeſcenſion, God the Son, Redeemer of the world."

To whom with the Father, &c.

SER.

SERMON III.

Jacob's Prophecy explained and conſidered, in a Sermon preached on Chriſtmas-day.

SERMON III.

Jacob's [illegible] explained and
considered, in a Sermon
preached on Chriſtmas-day.

BRITISH MUSEUM

SERMON III.

GENESIS, Chap. xlix, Ver. 10.

The Sceptre ſhall not depart from Judah, nor a Law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him ſhall the gathering of the people be.

THE patriarch Jacob, being about to ſleep with his fathers, about to quit this vale of miſery, and become an inhabitant of the heavenly Jeruſalem, aſſembles his ſons, in order to foretel what particular events ſhould in proceſs of time happen unto their families.

Gathered round the old man's couch, Pity ſits painted on each cheek, Grief bedews their eyes with tears, to ſee an aged parent blind, to ſee the fountain of their life dried up, whilſt each, with anxious look, attends the ſolemn prediction of their future fate.

After

After beginning with Reuben, his firſt-born, after declaring certain things that ſhould happen unto the poſterity of Simeon and Levi; after this, Jacob proceeds to his ſon Judah, and delivers that famous prophecy which ſo minutely correſponds with this day's event. "The ſceptre," ſays the patriarch, "ſhall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him ſhall the gathering of the people be."

As therefore the religion of Jeſus is intirely founded upon the Old Teſtament, as the reaſon why men in general embrace not this religion more heartily, is, becauſe they are ſuch ſtrangers to the meaning of the Hebrew ſcriptures*, as all the prophecies therein contained have ſome manifeſt relation to Chriſt, as this is the real ſtate of the caſe, a conciſe explanation of the text, and a ſhort hiſtorical account how exactly the prediction was compleated in all its parts, will at once go a great way towards eſtabliſhing the truth of Chriſtianity, and

* That many have no better acquaintance with Chriſt, and his apoſtles, is, becauſe they are ſuch ſtrangers to Moſes and Aaron. Godwyn.

and afford a fund for ſome uſeful reflections ſuitable to the preſent occaſion.

I ſay, eſtabliſh the truth of Chriſtianity, becauſe the Goſpels of themſelves prove nothing; they contain only a ſimple narrative of facts, an hiſtorical account that ſuch things did happen, as the law figured out *, and the prophets declared ſhould come to paſs.

A man, therefore, willing to know the true foundation of his faith, muſt be directed unto the Old Teſtament, ſhould be informed that our Lord did nothing but what was in ſome part of that book alluded to, and ought to be inſtructed in a multitude of prophecies which ſo clearly relate to Chriſt, that they cannot, with any ſhadow of propriety, be applied to another perſon. In this caſe, there is an abſolute impoſſibility of deception.

Becauſe if ſeveral different men, living in different ages, belonging to different countries, yet all conſpire in declaring that ſuch events ſhould happen, perhaps a thouſand years after their deaths; if theſe things do literally come to paſs, agreeable to

* Vide Bate on the Types.

to their predictions; if this be the caſe, here is a proof not to be controverted, that ſuch perſons muſt have been directed in their prophecies by infinite wiſdom, which pierces into the remoteſt futurity. In other words, they muſt have been divinely inſpired, and therefore both the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelations agreeing together in perfect harmony, muſt be what they pretend to, "written under the direction of an infallible God *."

That the famous prophecy of Jacob, now to be examined (which was delivered before the promulgation of the law at Sinai, and conſequently above two

* Collins, although no friend to revelation, hath an obſervation upon prophecy, which I ſhall crave leave to tranſcribe. Laſtly, ſaith he, *prophecies fulfilled* ſeem the moſt proper arguments to evince the truth of a revelation which is deſigned to be univerſally promulgated to men. For a man, for example, who has the Old Teſtament put into his hands, which contains *prophecies*, and the New Teſtament, which contains their *completions*, and is ſatisfied that the Old Teſtament exiſted before the New, may have a compleat internal divine demonſtration of the truth of Chriſtianity. *Ground and Reaſons of the Chriſtian Religion.*

This obſervation is juſt, although Collins might deſign it ironically.

two thouſand years before the event it alluded to was finally accompliſhed), that this was of ſuch a ſtamp as to add validity to the ſcriptures, will appear evident from a ſurvey of the prediction; the meaning of which it will be firſt neceſſary to elucidate.

The word we tranſlate *ſceptre* *, hath ſeveral ſenſes, all bearing a diſtant analogy to the root from whence it is derived. But as the verſes preceding the text contain a declaration, that Judah ſhould have dominion not only over his enemies, but brethren alſo, the context clearly determines the ſenſe of the word, and it ſignifies power, rule, or authority.

The prophecy, therefore, predicts the continuance and permanent duration of that power or authority which was juſt before promiſed. In this ſenſe the ſame phraſe is uſed, nor is it capable of any

* שבט, Shebhet, is thus rendered by many of the modern Rabbies, and the three Targums of Onkelos, Jonathan, and the Jeruſalem, favour ſuch an interpretation. Jenning's Jewiſh Antiquities.

any other, when it is ſaid, "the *ſceptre* of Egypt ſhall depart away †."

The term *law-giver* intimates any ruler, judge, chief man, or magiſtrate, although he is not poſſeſſed of ſovereign authority.

The phraſe *from between his feet*, is an idiom peculiar to the Hebrew language, and ſignifies, from his ſeed or poſterity. Shiloh literally means a perſon that is *ſent*, under which character our bleſſed Lord frequently deſcribes himſelf. But all the antient and modern Jews, as well as Chriſtians, acknowledge that the Meſſiah is hereby underſtood. The ſame is confeſſed in the Targums. *.

The remaining clauſe to be enquired into, is, "to him ſhall the gathering of the people be;" which certainly alludes to the converſion of the Gentiles unto the Chriſtian faith ‡.

The words thus explained, let us modernize the prophecy, and adapt it to the ſimple apprehenſion of

† Zechariah, chap. x. ver. 11.

* The Targums are antient interpretations of ſcripture, to which the Jews pay implicit obedience.

‡ Vide Mede's Works.

of every capacity. "The family of Judah ſhall not ceaſe from being a ſtate, or body politic, his poſterity ſhall poſſeſs a power of government and juriſdiction within themſelves *, which ſhall never finally depart from them, until the Meſſiah, whom God hath promiſed to ſend, ſhall actually come into the world, and "to him ſhall the gathering of the people be." In his time ſhall the Gentiles be converted and collected together, like ſheep into one fold, under one and the ſame ſhepherd, the Saviour ſent from God."

To perceive how exactly this prophecy was fulfilled, it will be neceſſary to run over a ſhort detail of the Jewiſh affairs.

During the firſt ages of the world, when men's lives were extended to an uncommon length, the

 fathers

* The *ſceptre* may refer to the royal government in the houſe of David, and the *law-giver* (which is a word of lower ſignification) to the form of government under Zerubbabel and the Maccabees, till Judea was made a Roman province. For although ſome of theſe governors were not of the tribe of Judah, the Maccabees for inſtance, who were prieſts of the tribe of Levi, nevertheleſs, the tribe of Judah was the centre of the ſtate, or the ſeat of government. *Jenning's Jewiſh Antiquities.*

fathers of families exerciſed a kind of princely authority over their houſhold.

After the Iſraelites left Egypt, and until their entrance into Canaan, they were governed by the immediate interpoſition of God.

Joſhua ſucceeded Moſes, and upon his death, the Jews were ruled by what they called judges, until the time they became earneſt in their requeſts to have, like other nations, a king ſet over them.

We all know that the whole body of the people were divided into twelve diſtinct tribes or families, each bearing the name of that perſon from whom they originally ſprang.

In proceſs of time, ten of theſe tribes revolted, and rebelled againſt Rehoboam, the ſon of Solomon. Judah, which was the largeſt, and Benjamin the ſmalleſt, were the only two tribes who adhered together.

Soon after this, a fatal ſeparation enſued, and all the Iſraelites, but the poſterity of Judah, were taken priſoners, and carried into captivity, by Tiglath-pileſer, king of Aſſyria.

From

From this period, all ſhadow of government or authority abſolutely departed from every tribe, but that of Judah. During, however, the various viciſſitudes, during the many changes that happened to the reſt of the Jews, the deſcendants of Judah ſtill ſtuck cloſe together, always kept up a ſhew of government, had their own rulers, and in fact ſo continued until they were releaſed from the Babyloniſh captivity by Cyrus, who permitted them to return to their own country, and rebuild Jeruſalem.

The ten tribes were loſt and intermixed with the conquerors: Judah with the little appendage of Benjamin preſerved their prieſts, elders, and other officers, in ſucceſſion, who preſided over the civil and eccleſiaſtical affairs of the people. The tribe of Judah alſo inhabiting Jeruſalem, continued during every commotion the centre of the ſtate; nor was it ever known that a ſtranger, one of another nation, governed them, until the time of Herod, during whoſe adminiſtration Chriſt was actually born.

From what hath been delivered, it appears therefore that the more accurately we examine into the Jewiſh hiſtory, the clearer ſhall we perceive

how literally Jacob's prophecy was fulfilled: and granting his capacity to have been ever ſo extenſive at the time he delivered it, his family was in a ſtate of ſlavery to the Egyptians, conſequently, nothing could be more contrary to the courſe of human affairs, than that they ſhould ever recover their freedom, and be united in any form of government.

Admitting, however, he could ſhrewdly gueſs this would be the caſe, it was impoſſible to divine that the ſhadow of government ſhould be confined excluſively to the deſcendants of one of his ſons; ſtill more difficult was it for Jacob to pronounce, that it would ſubſiſt amongſt ſuch a tribe, for preciſely ſo long a time and no longer. Whereas he expreſly informs us, it was to continue in the family of Judah only, until the Meſſiah ſhould be born, and hiſtory bears teſtimony to the truth, becauſe it did ſo continue; and when Chriſt came into the world, all ſhew of government departed from amongſt them, and in a few years their city was totally demoliſhed, and they continue vagabonds even unto this very hour.

Nor was it leſs certain, that Shiloh gathered together the diſperſed; for the truth was preached in

in every nation, and the Gentiles were in multitudes converted to the faith of Chriſt.

Having now gone through the prophecy in as compleat a manner as the limits of diſcourſes of this nature will admit, having ſeen how exactly it was fulfilled in all its parts, ſeveral reflexions naturally ariſe from the ſubject.

A ſilly notion gains ground amongſt the people, that Chriſtianity commenced only from the birth of Jeſus. The Jews are ſuppoſed to have been a race who had but a faint, if any knowledge of a Redeemer, and their religion is imagined to have been eſſentially different from ours.

But this is an opinion void of the ſmalleſt foundation. Their ceremonies were indeed different, but the meaning of thoſe ceremonies was to exhibit in a figure, what Chriſt the reality ſhould do and ſuffer, when he came in the fleſh. The Jews were in mercy preſerved a diſtinct people, as ſo many vehicles to convey to after ages the truths of the goſpel. Their hopes of pardon were founded on the ſame Saviour, and they had no notion of redemption, but by the blood of a perſon in Jehovah, who ſhould become incarnate. Each devout

Jew

Jew alſo hoped to be alive, when the Meſſiah came.

The expectation of a deliverer, merely temporal, obtained amongſt them during the latter age, a little before the ſceptre departed from Judah, when they had perverted the ſenſe of the Hebrew ſcriptures, and of the ſeveral prophecies which related to Chriſt *.

In ſhort, the antient Jews underſtood the true intent of all their rites, as well as we do the deſign of bread and wine in the bleſſed ſacrament: they were, as one of our homilies expreſſes it, *Chriſtian men*, in as much as they expected ſalvation through the merits of our common Meſſiah.

The religious duties incumbent upon them were preciſely the ſame, alſo to which we are exhorted. They

* "As the notion that the Meſſiah was to be a temporal deliverer, ſprang up in the time of the captivity, and the Septuagint tranſlation was not made until about the middle of the five hundred and thirty-ſix years that paſſed between the return of the Jews from captivity, and the coming of Chriſt, this notion, falſe as it was, yet contributed to keep up the expectation of a Meſſiah. For this opinion did not infect the whole Jewiſh nation; many at the advent of Chriſt waited for the ſpiritual redemption of Iſrael." *Letters on the Septuagint.*

They were commanded to love Jehovah Elohim, for that ſignal act of mercy, Redemption by Chriſt. And indeed, ſo great an impreſſion had this doctrine made upon the minds of all men, Gentile as well as Jew, that at the time our Lord actually appeared in the fleſh, an opinion * univerſally prevailed in the world, that Nature was about to bring forth a wonderful deliverer, reſtorer, and king of the univerſe; inſomuch that this tradition ſo alarmed the Roman ſenate, as to occaſion them to make a decree, according to Suetonius, that no child born that year ſhould be brought up. But the ſenators, whoſe wives were at that time pregnant, ſtopped its execution. The Jews alſo anxiouſly expected this

* Dr. Lowth, in his admirable book, De ſacra poeſe Hebræorum, demonſtrates, that the famous Pollio of Virgil, could not agree with any perſon or condition of the Roman ſtate, at the time it was written. And upon the ſtyle being ſimilar to that of Iſaiah, he obſerves, "Senſus imagines dictio etiam cum *ſacris vatibus*, mirum in modum congruens, res ipſa, vel in ſe tam elata et magnifica, vel potius a poeta omnium licet verecundiſſimo ac ſeveriſſimo in eam altitudinem exaggerata, ut mihi nullo modo perſuadere poſſim quin ſubſit aliquid,". The Doctor, in another place, ingenuouſly confeſſes, that he does not underſtand the eclogue: "Mihi quidem illud uſu venire plane profiteor, ut cum carmen hoc ea ex parte contemplor quanto id ſepius relego tanto intelligam minus."

this ſurpriſing perſon; and ſome imagined that Herod, who beautified the temple, was *He*, and called themſelves Herodians; others adhered to Theudas; others, again, to Judas of Galilee; both of whom pretended to be the promiſed deliverer. So truly was our Lord what the prophet Haggai juſtly ſtyles him, the "deſire of all nations."

As therefore the Jews waited with great anxiety for the Meſſiah's coming, as they referred all their hopes of ſalvation to this future Redeemer, we who live under the mild diſpenſation of his laws, we who exiſt in the laſt age of the world, ſhould be careful that our hearts are properly affected with a ſenſe of the benefits flowing from Chriſt's birth.

The Divine Being, willing to promote our happineſs, has provided in him a remedy for all our maladies. No outward regularity of conduct can appeaſe the juſtice of God, or make atonement for paſt offences. Holineſs, ſpotleſs holineſs, is ſo extremely eſſential, that without it no man can ever hope to ſee the Lord. This, with all our beſt endeavors, we never can attain; becauſe the very beſt of all our actions are conſtantly tainted with a criminal weakneſs.

In

In the ſufferings of Chriſt, therefore, behold an ample ſatisfaction made for all our ſins: by his merits he laid claim to the Holy Ghoſt's aſſiſtance, by which our weak attempts are aided: and he who feels his own inability to perform the will of God, he who expects redemption through blood divine, and acts like a creature ſenſible of obligations to its Creator, ſuch a perſon is moſt aſſuredly in the road that leadeth unto life eternal.

Preſuming, with all humility, that you, my friends, are under this happy predicament, let us by a joint ſupplication intreat the God of nature not to ſuffer this day's feeble efforts of grateful acknowledgment to paſs unnoticed.

O! thou great univerſal Parent, whoſe power each ſpire of graſs proclaims, whoſe wiſdom all nature loudly ecchoes in an hymn divine! Thee we now thank for every gracious good! thee we adore for mercies, the power of human language faileth to deſcribe! to thee we fly for ſhelter from impending evils. For the Redeemer's ſake, who as on this day abaſed himſelf, to ſnatch us from eternal ruin, for his dear ſake, hear our prayers, although ſhort of what we would expreſs: relieve our wants, cure our diſtempered minds, and teach us

to

to kiſs the hand to which we owe our daily preſervation.

Let guardian angels hover round our couch, and peaceful ſlumbers fit us for to-morrow's labour. Extend the knowledge of a Saviour to nations yet in darkneſs. Haſten, Lord, thy glorious kingdom, prepare us for the hour of death, and when expiring Nature breathes her laſt, join us, we beſeech thee, to the happy choir, whoſe never ceaſing ſhouts ſhall make eternity reſound with thankſgivings unto thee, O Sovereign Creator, for ſending thy Son into the world to become a propitiation for all our ſins.

Now to God the Father, &c.

SER-

SERMON IV.

An earneſt Perſuaſive to partake of the Holy Communion.

Preached on Sacrament Sunday.

SERMON IV.

St. John, Chap. vi. Verſe 33, and 34.

For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

Then ſaid they unto him, Lord evermore give us this bread.

OUR bleſſed Saviour, having in a miraculous manner multiplied a *ſmall* quantity of food, ſo as to feed ſeveral thouſand people, returned to a city called Capernaum.

Being followed by thoſe who were eye-witneſſes of the fact, and had partaken of the repaſt, he reprehends their mercenary motives, declaring, that they *ſought* him, not on account of the wonderful works he performed, nor, that they might become wiſe unto ſalvation, but merely, becauſe they had eaten of the loaves and were filled.

After

After requeſting them not to beſtow ſo much labour about temporal food, or the meat that periſheth, they enter into a kind of remonſtrance with him, demanding ſome further ſign as an inducement to believe.

Our fathers, ſay they, did eat manna in the deſert: were, in a barren wilderneſs, wonderfully ſupported by food that deſcended from the ſky.

To which our Lord replies, that the manna was nevertheleſs not the *true* bread of God, becauſe it ſerved to nouriſh the *body only*. But the real food diſtributed by the Almighty, is *he* who cometh down *from* heaven, upon whom the *ſoul* feeds; and feeding, is prepared for the enjoyment of life everlaſting.

Struck with the deſcription, and truly ſenſible how much they ſtood in need of ſuch ſupport, they put up a ſhort but pathetic ejaculation. Lord! we beſeech thee give *us* evermore this bread!

The ſolemn tranſaction in which I truſt the majority of this aſſembly propoſe being this day concerned, will juſtify an ample diſplay of the words

words before us. Their intent bearing a near relation to the nouriſhment each pious believer hopes to receive from the Lord's table.

But, in a diſcourſe of this kind, nothing can be expected, unleſs a calm diſpaſſionate addreſs to the underſtanding. Any effects ariſing from the paſſions, being too momentary and ſhort lived, where ſubjects *ſo ſerious* are the points of examination.

We will therefore explain the meaning of the phraſe *bread of God*, and ſhew how, and in what manner Chriſt, who deſcended from heaven, gave life unto the world.

Man is a compoſition of a viſible frame, and an inviſible ſoul. The body was created out of a ſpecies of vegetable mould *; and being earthly, is in common with other animals, ſupported by the material elements, till it ſhall return to its original duſt.

The

* Human bones when dry and properly calcined, are ſaid to make much the beſt clay. A corroborating proof that we are formed from earthy materials.

The ſoul is a ſpiritual being, endowed with great and tranſcendant faculties. Such as a capacity to look backward before time began, and forward to the final period or end of all things.

But above all, it is able, when properly inſtructed to love, converſe with, and adore the great author of nature.

Formed for eternal life, it is of courſe immortal. Subject to no decay, nor liable to any diſſolution. But, as a created being, it cannot have life in itſelf, but muſt depend upon the Creator for continual nouriſhment and ſupport. In ſhort, like its partner the body, it alſo muſt be fed, though with a very different and ſuperior kind of food. Even ſome ſpiritual ſupplies from the eternal divinity of Chriſt.

As, however, all our ideas ariſe from the ſenſes and ſenſible objects. The ſcriptures when treating upon any ſubject relative to the deity, conſtantly uſe a language accommodated to the weak condition of our nature. Thus God himſelf is ſaid to have hands, eyes, and the different parts of

of which a human body is compoſed *. He is alſo repreſented winking at, as not willing to ſee our iniquities.

Now 'tis manifeſt, that none of theſe things can be true in the literal ſenſe of the words. They are all ſo many ſtrong metaphors, by which means things we are well acquainted with, are ſubſtituted to give us ſome notion about thoſe objects that are inviſible to our bodily eyes.

The ſame kind of analogy is evident in the words we have choſen for a text. Bread is the neceſſary ſuſtenance and ſupport of our bodily frame. The divinity of Chriſt which came down from heaven, is no leſs neceſſary for the ſupport of our ſpiritual ſubſtance the ſoul. It is, there-

 fore

* Dr. Lowth in his lecture upon the Canticles, thus expreſſes himſelf. "In ſacris itaque ſcripturis deſcendit quodammodo in terram Deus, humano corpore, membris, ſenſibus, affectibus indutus; omnia mortali ſimilis." And he adds,

Neque ſane eſt ulla mentis humanæ commotio ac perturbatio, quæ non cum omnibus ſuis adjunctis *plane* ac ſine omni remedio ac lenimento Deo tribuatur; nec minimum ex, quæ multum terrenæ fœcis ſecum admiſtum habere videntur, iracundia, dolor, odium, ultio."

De Sacra Poeſi Hæbræorum.

fore, called by the ſame name, becauſe productive of ſimilar effects. The one, being the cauſe of our animal, the other, of our ſpiritual life. The latter is full as eſſential to the health of our ſoul, as bread, the former, to the ſtrength or vigour of our body. In ſhort, the mind of man may exiſt, but cannot with propriety be ſaid to live when deprived of the ſupport it ſhould receive from the great Father of ſpirits.

On theſe ſeveral accounts, therefore, the divinity of our Lord is called the bread of life. "I, ſaith he, am that living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he ſhall live for ever." This could not be ſpoken of Chriſt's humanity, that never having been in heaven, but muſt ſignify his divine nature, which in great humility *deſcended*, to give life unto the world.

Beſides, being as God the cauſe that willed us into exiſtence, Chriſt as the perſon who undertook our redemption, is the true and only ſource of every bleſſing with which that exiſtence is crowned.

Mere

Mere animal life is a noble gift, a rich treaſure none thinks he can e'er prize too much. This, through a failure in the firſt pair's obedience, was abſolutely forfeited, and when the ſentence was about to be put in execution, Chriſt the bread of life kindly interpoſed, ſnatched the human race from the tenfold horrors of the yawning gulph, and became the kind diſtributor of a twofold life in time and in eternity.

Hence man, with all his powers, became the ſole property of this Lord who bought this Saviour who delivered him.

Various are the wants, various the aſſiſtances we hourly ſtand in need of through every period of our exiſtence. As various are the benefits confered by Chriſt, which render the life he gave more than doubly comfortable.

In the infant ſtate, ſuch is the delicate nature, ſuch the feebleneſs of our frame, that all the careful tenderneſs of affection, all the ſoft ſolicitude of maternal inſtinct, is wholly inſufficient to preſerve us from real or accidental ills innumerable.

The little babe, though innocent, is taught to weep; and though unconſcious of guilt, the pearly dew-drop trembles in his eye. In ſhort, tears trickle down its cherub face long before the artleſs ſtranger has learnt the way to ſin.

You who have felt the yearnings of a mother, you whoſe bowels have been moved by compaſſion towards the infant ſon of your womb, you muſt doubtleſs be a much better judge; but to me it ſeems that theſe little fondlings undergo woes far different from any ariſing from bodily pain, woes of the mind, which neither the power of medicine or art, no, nor the anxious care of a fond parent can relieve. Viſible only to that Redeemer who gave the life, his Almighty power alone can adminiſter an adequate remedy; nor can it be ſuppoſed, that he who deſcended to give life, and its train of bleſſings, to a world of ſinners, will refuſe the proper ſuccour to an infant mind diſtreſſed.

When youth advances, when the pulſe beats high, and tempeſtuous paſſion bears the ſway, pleaſed with each glittering bauble, this novel ſcene affords, the fancy is ſolely intent upon forming wreaths of happineſs to crown our brow. Each

pleaſing

pleaſing reverie, each romantic proſpect, though remote from truth, remote from common ſenſe, remote from the goſpel rule of duty, is yet indulged, cheriſhed, and put in execution. Vice ſo early ſown in all our breaſts, affords a melancholy crop. Each man has ſome favourite point in view, ſubtly lays his cobweb plans; is, in the world's ſenſe of the word, ſagacious, deeply weaves his net-work, ſchemes to catch---what? a fly, that buzzes for a moment in our ear, and then is fled for ever.

The word of Chriſt, the great charter of our ſalvation, we ſeldom peep into, ſince there rude truth aſſaults us, and perhaps our favourite paſſion is condemned as nonſenſical, ridiculous, and abſurd.

If there be any reſemblance of truth in the above ſhort ſketch, each humble, pious Chriſtian will, nay muſt, ſmite upon his breaſt, acknowledging too much of his former time to have been ſquandered in ſome ſuch idle purſuit.

Vice, error, and impiety, in youth, is as it were a tax we pay to the prince of darkneſs, for having, by the fall, become his ſubjects; and he only who came

came down from heaven can rectify our faculties, or retrieve us from this bondage.

When, indeed, our evening ſun begins to ſet, when Time has ſnowed upon our head, when paſſion cools, and judgment is matured by age, we ſtop ſhort in the courſe, look back upon the path we have trod, ſee the wandering maze we have travelled, and ſharply criticiſe upon each loitering hour, each dilatory delay that happened in the journey.

Some, 'tis true, there are, upon whom time has no other effect than to ripen them in folly, or harden them in vice; who hobble after amuſement, and nod with the cup of pleaſure in their trembling hand; but God forbid their numbers ſhould be great, ſince the follies of youth, played over by the wrinkled brow of age, or a ſhaking palſied head, with a worldly, irreligious heart, is, of all ſights, the moſt ſhocking to humanity.

The generality of thinking men ſurvey the errors of their younger years with deep remorſe, and at every vice let drop a ſigh. The different end of the perſpective being turned to their eye, what

what once appeared a dreadful diſappointment, is now deemed a ſingular mercy; and a nearer view affords them reaſon to be thankful to Chriſt for baffling and defeating thoſe ſchemes, which, if attended with ſucceſs, had probably plunged them into utter deſtruction.

Theſe are ſome of the many juſt ſentiments, to inſpire us with which Chriſt came down from heaven.

This life he gave us, and with it many, very many ſocial comforts. But he would alſo teach us the proper teſt, the true value of all earthly bleſſings.

For riches, fain would he give us that homely, but heavenly gueſt, content. For noiſy mirth, ſerenity, and a ſmile at heart. For the fantaſtic applauſe of a giddy multitude, the ſecret approbation of a conſcience void of offence. For ambition, perfect reſignation to the divine will. For vanity, or ſelf conceit, deep humility. And for that paltry paſſion, *envy*, a humanity, for Chriſt's ſake, that flows on all, that wiſhes the ſucceſs of each brother in the Lord; ſtoops to the meaneſt,

meaneſt, deems none beneath its notice, glories, if occaſion offers to promote another's welfare, nor dreams of any recompence but the Redeemer's ſmile of approbation.

This is the kind of life chalked out by our bleſſed Maſter; this would ſtrew the thorny way with roſes, and convert a world full of woe, anguiſh and complaint, into an Eden, a terreſtrial paradiſe. What is ſtill more, it ſmooths the road, and is the great preparative for that eternal life, to purchaſe which our Lord became a man of ſorrows.

Endleſs miſery is the neceſſary conſequence of ſin. This is, in Scripture, frequently called *death*; becauſe, as that deprives the body of every pleaſure ariſing from its exiſtence, ſo doth this rob the ſoul of every mental joy flowing from the perpetual fruition of its God.

To give poor man a ſecond trial; to afford him a further opportunity of gathering the fruit of the tree of life, and enjoying a happy immortality; for this end, a perſon in Jehovah became himſelf our ſurety. The ſecond ſubſiſtence

ence in the Godhead deſcended, if I may ſo ſpeak, to inhabit, or dwell, in a human body; ſuffered in this body the puniſhment due to ſin; and having thus ranſomed, thus purchaſed, had a right to diſtribute eternal life to every repenting believer who ſhould rely upon him only for ſalvation.

When I ſay ſuffered, I do not mean merely crucifixion; that was the leaſt part of the diſmal tragedy. But his *ſoul* was made a ſacrifice to offended juſtice; and being perfect God, as well as man, the agonies of his mind no human language can deſcribe.

I am no friend to a ſtring of ſcripture quotations; a Chriſtian is always ſuppoſed to be tolerably well verſed in the Bible. There is, however, a pert petulance in human nature, which frequently leads men to cenſure what they do not thoroughly underſtand. To avoid cavil, I ſhall therefore only obſerve, that not a tittle has been advanced, but what could be clearly proved from the mouth of God himſelf.

Theſe

Theſe things being indiſputably true, there remains no difficulty in diſcovering the manner how the real bread of God gave life unto the world. He atoned for our ſins, delivered us from the curſe of the law, and by raiſing his own body from the grave, gave demonſtration that he was both able and willing to raiſe us up, at the laſt day, unto eternal glory.

The ſoul of man being ſpiritual, is only capable of an immediate correſpondence with the Deity, who is alſo a ſpirit.

But as the body is to ſhare in the reward, ſo is it alſo ordained to bear a part in the outward worſhip of Chriſt. Hence kneeling, proſtration, and uncovering the head, have ever been practiſed in the church ſervice; ceremonies, in themſelves, of no intrinſic value, but as they are ſigns of an inward contrition, humility and reſpect. Receiving, however, the ſanction of Chriſt, they become indiſpenſably neceſſary: they are the ordinary means whereby he conveys the extraordinary gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit.

One inſtitution there is, the moſt ſolemn act man, as a fallen creature, can be concerned in: 'Tis

'Tis called a Sacrament, becauſe we are ſuppoſed to enter into a ſerious league, covenant, or oath, with Chriſt, from henceforward to continue faithful, though not faultleſs, ſubjects.

The diſpoſitions neceſſary to qualify us to partake of the bleſſing, are faith and thankfulneſs, a thorough conviction that Chriſt made ample ſatisfaction for the ſins of the world; that it would be madneſs to think of approaching the Deity, but through his blood; and that, in virtue of his merits and interceſſion, our ſins ſhall be blotted out, nor be remembered any more.

We are to thank the ſacred Trinity for contriving this gracious method of redemption; to love them for planning it, and the humanity of Chriſt for executing it; and, after his example, ſincerely to love, or wiſh well to all mankind as our brethren.

The benefits ariſing from this holy communion are, that we take heavenly food and ſupport; which, by the aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, rectifies our minds and actions here, ſo as to entitle us, through Chriſt, to the inheritance and love of God hereafter.

Theſe

Theſe are ſome of the capital advantages reſulting from the Sacrament; a thing ſo eſſential to ſalvation, that they who drink not of this cup, can have no ſupport from God, nor any redemption. The words of Chriſt are clear, and amazingly ſtrong, upon this head: "Except (ſays he) ye eat the fleſh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no eternal life in you. But whoſo eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my blood, he only hath eternal life, and I will raiſe him up to glory at the laſt day." Whether a Chriſtian ought, after this, to turn his back upon the Sacrament, let theſe quotations decide.

A too rigid tranſlation hath terrified many. "He that eateth or drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh to himſelf damnation." But it ought to be rendered *judgment*. The truth is this: whilſt prophecy and miracles laſted, an unworthy, careleſs eater, was ſoon after puniſhed with death, or bodily ſickneſs. The crime of eating unworthily is ſtill the ſame; but when, or how, the puniſhment takes place, I pretend not to determine.

As to the excuſe of not being qualified, pray, whoſe fault is that? Life is not worth a wiſh, but as it affords us time to be prepared for hereafter.

'Tis

'Tis a ſaying with ſome, that "they are great ſinners, and therefore dare not communicate." For heaven's ſake, my brethren, are we not all in the ſame predicament? If we differ from, we are not better than others; 'tis all the free gift of Chriſt; nor has man any thing to do, but thankfully to accept the bleſſing, and love the benefactor. It would be an odd aſſertion for a man violently diſeaſed to tell a ſkilful phyſician he was not qualified to be cured. In ſhort, Time, with his downy feet, treads ſoftly on our ſilent hours: Nature haſtens to decay, and we ſhould be prepared for our laſt, our final change.

Soon ſhall the grave, the gay, the beautiful and the young, recline their heads upon the ſilent lap of earth. Soon ſhall the ſpade diſturb the bones of others, to make for us a place to moulder in. Soon ſhall the trembling tear ſtart from the eye of a kind friend, whoſe faithful arm ſuſtains our ſinking head. Soon ſhall the ſmall circle of our kindred be aſſembled; each, with anxious look, hovering round our couch: fearful to diſturb, ſome one, more tender than the reſt, ſoftly ſteals a parting kiſs. And when the laſt heavy ſigh is over, too big with grief to ſpeak, ſilent dejection

dejection ſits upon each cheek; ſave that the prattling infant, ſtruck with wonder and amazement, burſts into tears, becauſe it ſees its mother weep. When the body is thus broken and helpleſs; when its feeble limbs are benumbed with a clay-cold dew; when death advances, by ſlow paces, to the heart; is *this* a proper time for prayer, for preparation or repentance?

If not, further procraſtination is madneſs and abſurdity. A future month no man can call his own. See! how each fellow mortal, as in a battle, drops around us. To-day the bread of life is diſtributed; to-day the grand viaticum, the ſpiritual ſupport of life eternal, is offered to all who have a reliſh for ſuch heavenly manna. Qualified by faith, humility and repentance, we ſhall digeſt the food which God hath provided for the nouriſhment of our ſouls: and thus, when a general ſhout ſhall rend the ſkies; when Chriſt, the true bread of life, ſhall viſibly deſcend, we ſhall be prepared to meet him, and to enjoy that exalted felicity he will confer upon thoſe who have ſtudiouſly endeavoured to recommend themſelves to his favour and protection.

Now to God the Father, &c.

SER-

SERMON V.

The Advantage and Neceſſity of being a ſincere Chriſtian.

SERMON V.

SERMON V.

ACTS, Chap. xxvi. Verſe 28.

Then Agrippa ſaid unto Paul, Almoſt thou perſuadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.

TO St. Luke we are indebted for the book before us, called, The Acts of the Apoſtles.

The deſign of which is to give a clear and ſuccinct detail of the chief tranſactions performed by the perſons who were wholly engaged in the converſion of Jews and Heathens to the faith and knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt.

It accordingly begins with an account of our Lord's aſcenſion; ſets forth the manner uſed in chuſing an apoſtle in the ſtead of Judas; acquaints us with every particular relative to the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt; and ſhews the ſucceſs

the inſpired teachers met with in their laborious endeavours to propagate the goſpel.

The part that St. Paul bore in this undertaking being very conſiderable, he, in a manner, eclipſes the other apoſtles. His natural abilities were great, his learning univerſal and extenſive, his eloquence manly, flowing, and perſuaſive; his ſtyle nervous, his judgment acute, and his piety warm and affectionate.

Formed by nature for an orator, he was no ſtranger to the human heart, but well knew all the avenues and paſſes that lead to that ſeat of the affections. Such a man, with ſuch endowments, became the moſt valuable acquiſition to the Chriſtian cauſe. No wonder, therefore, the writer of this hiſtory is more than ordinarily circumſpect in particularizing every minute action in which this truly great perſon was engaged.

We have accordingly a regular account of his converſion, call to the miniſtry, and ſucceſsful preaching. Each oppoſition he met with, each perſecution he ſuffered, is related with care and exactneſs.

It happened, among other ſpecies of evil treatment, that being in the temple at Jeruſalem, the Jews raiſed an uproar, and actually made an attempt to aſſaſſinate him. Paul, pleading the privileges of a Roman, appeals for judgment unto the emperor, Auguſtus Cæſar. In his way to Rome, he arrives at Cæſarea, where Felix was at that time governor. This man being ſoon after recalled, one Feſtus was appointed to the government of the province.

At his firſt acceſſion to the office, examining, as we may ſuppoſe, the ſtate of the priſoners, he obſerves amongſt them the name of Paul; and finding that the chief accuſations alledged againſt him were, as the heathen expreſſes it, matters relative to the Jewiſh ſuperſtition, and concerning one Jeſus that was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. Finding this to be the caſe, he was unwilling to enter further into the affair.

A neighbouring king, however, coming at this time, with his wife Bernice, to Cæſarea, in order to pay a complimentary viſit to Feſtus on his late promotion; and being withal no ſtranger to St. Paul's caſe, he was prompted by curioſity to hear

the man, the thunder of whoſe eloquence had formerly made a Roman governor tremble upon his throne; and the force of whoſe arguments had ſtruck a damp upon his heart, and caſt a deadly ſhade over all his outward ſplendor.

Agrippa therefore acquaints Feſtus with this his deſire: I would wiſh, ſays he, to hear the man myſelf. Accordingly, in pure complaiſance to ſuch a requeſt, the ſervant of him by whom kings reign, the miniſter of him who is the reſurrection of the dead, is made a mere ſpectacle for the enquiring eye of curioſity to gaze upon.

Agrippa, Bernice his wife, and all the men of quality in the city, being, with great pomp and ſplendor, aſſembled; the poor apoſtle, deſpicable indeed in outward appearance, being bound, and in chains, yet delivers an oration not to be parallelled by the great maſters of ancient eloquence.

I may perhaps be pardoned for making one obſervation, though not immediately to our preſent purpoſe. Oratory, whether at the bar, or from the pulpit, never was, perhaps, ſo much attended to, or its effects ſo univerſal, as at preſent.

ſent. Too much it cannot be cultivated or admired; becauſe when true religion is its theme, then is it of the greateſt benefit to the world. All I would therefore be underſtood to inſinuate, is, that the word of God affords the moſt ſtriking inſtances of ſublime expreſſions, lofty numbers, and flowing harmony, the power of language can furniſh. Different parts of St. Paul's epiſtles; the 26th chapter of the Acts, now before us; many of the Pſalms; the whole prophecy of Iſaiah; and that ſurpriſing deſcription of the power of God in Moſes, 'And God ſaid---what? 'Let there be light, and light there was.' Theſe are ſo many inſtances of the true majeſty in writing, and would inſtruct perſons who have any ſouls, or delight in ſpeaking gracefully, better than all the bombaſt fuſtian produced by playwrights for theſe fifty years paſt.

But to return. It ſeems king Agrippa well underſtood the Jewiſh cuſtoms, and actually believed ſome part of the divine writings. Hence, though Feſtus the heathen looked upon Paul as a madman, when he talked of Chriſt's being riſen from the dead; Agrippa, on the contrary, was ſo wrought upon by the force of his arguments, that

he

he candidly makes the following confeſſion: Really, Paul, I know not how it is, but thou almoſt perſuadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.

What particular mode of reaſoning the holy orator made uſe of, we know not; but if the king actually acknowledged the authority of the prophetic writings, 'tis likely he proved from thoſe books that Jeſus was the very Meſſiah, the anointed Saviour, whom they had foretold ſhould die for the ſins of the world.

However, the ſole intent of the Bible, the grand end of all public prayers, the only uſe of the bleſſed ſacrament, the reaſon why a Sabbath was inſtituted, and the deſign of ſeparating a body of men from worldly affairs, is, that we may be perſuaded to be not almoſt, but altogether and entirely true and ſincere Chriſtians.

Every age has its vices to which it is more peculiarly addicted. 'Tis not much more than a century ſince religion was univerſally in faſhion. Hence thoſe whoſe hearts were totally eſtranged from the thing, were yet, for the ſake of decency, obliged to preſerve an appearance of piety; and

this

this is the true cauſe of that fanatic hypocriſy with which this nation was, in the times of civil diſcord and commotion, over-run.

On the contrary, we of the preſent time are hypocrites of a very different ſtamp, hypocrites in wickedneſs. Hence it is but too common to hear our young men boaſt of the triumphs they daily gain over ſhame, and the bluſh of modeſt nature. Should a religious education have been their fate, 'tis deemed a ſingular misfortune; and one of thoſe early prejudices they take all poſſible pains to get the better of. The vulgar are weak enough to believe free-thinking, or infidelity, is a mark of politeneſs; and free-acting, or groſs impiety, the true criterion of a man of ſpirit. In ſhort, ſomething has, of late, ſo totally aboliſhed all regard for Chriſt, all attention to his holy word, that we continually ſtand in need of a St. Paul at our elbow, to perſuade us to be Chriſtians, was it only in appearance.

An idle round of diſſipation deſtroys all ſerious piety from amongſt us; and a canine rage for public amuſements bears down each noble faculty of the ſoul; ſweeps us to the inglorious maſs of

triflers,

triflers, who live, expire, and are forgotten; murders our precious moments, and whirls us from ourſelves, our Saviour, and our God.

Chriſtianity is the moſt awful, ſerious, and momentous thing in nature. It abounds in promiſes to allure, and threats to terrify us into obedience. Let us but attend to a ſhort epitome of its grand, its fundamental article.

The Bible informs us, that a ſet of ſpiritual beings fell from their firſt eſtate: in conſequence of which, this our ſyſtem, or world, was created. The end propoſed in forming man was, that after a ſtate of trial, he might enjoy that celeſtial happineſs which the angels, by their crime, forfeited.

The Bible further informs us, that man alſo fell by yielding to the wicked ſuggeſtion of thoſe evil beings: that thus his judgment became overclouded, his underſtanding darkened, and his will corrupted. Polluted in body and ſoul, he was rendered obnoxious to the offended Deity.

From the word of God we alſo learn, that there are three perſons in the divine eſſence, each jointly

jointly poſſeſſed of infinite power, juſtice and love. We are told in Scripture, that they entered into a mutual covenant, or oath, for the redemption of man; the one to ſatisfy infinite juſtice, upon man's ſurety, inſtead of the offender himſelf; the other to join the human nature to his divine; become, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, our bondſman; ſuffer the penalty, and pay the debt due to infinite juſtice for every ſon of Adam: and the third, by ſuggeſting proper conſiderations, influence our minds, by faith and obedience, to accept the bleſſing.

Hence love, thankfulneſs, and imperfect praiſe, is all the return poor man is capable of making for ſuch mighty, mighty favours. This, if ſincere, is all that is required. Such qualifications entitle us, even us, muſhrooms of an hour, reptiles of a day, to all the perfections that were in Chriſt; his light, wiſdom, juſtice, holineſs, and ſtrength; to all his prayers, praiſes and confeſſions; to all his power, good works, and divine merits. So that, in ſhort, as he is God as well as man, all the glories of the godhead, which are unſpeakable, he can, in virtue of his blood, tranſfer and communicate to us, his younger brethren.

Theſe

Theſe, theſe are the ſtupendous benefits of Chriſtianity! And what, my brethren, what, in the name of common ſenſe, what but the influence of the arch-deceiver, can prevent our reaping ſuch advantages?

Various indeed are the ſtratagems, various the arts, various the obſtacles he throws in the way of our ſalvation. When young, or healthy, he tells us 'tis time enough, ſome years hence, to think of being a real Chriſtian. When aged and infirm, fain would he perſuade us 'tis then too late to turn unto the Lord that bought us. If in affluence, he aims at making us elated, deals out a proper doſe of ſelf-ſufficiency, and ſhuts our eyes to the divine hand that thus diſpenſes his ſalutary bleſſings. If in poverty, ſtrange things are whiſpered in our ears; we are taught to believe ourſelves deſerted by the Lord of glory; nay, tempted to think he muſt be far from good in ſuffering us thus to want.

Theſe are ſome of the many arrows deſigned to wound that peace which we have in Jeſus, deſigned to prevent our being almoſt, or altogether, ſuch Chriſtians as we *ought* to be. God knows,

ſuch

ſuch is the degeneracy of our diſpoſition, ſuch the pride, the chief ingredient in our compoſition, that we ſcarcely need the devil's inſinuation to draw us from our duty.

If, from the coldneſs of our conſtitution, the mode of our education, or a more than ordinary delicate habit of body; if from any, or all theſe cauſes combined, we are preſerved from the groſſer vices that infringe upon the laws, and deſtroy the peace and order of ſociety; too apt are many among us to conclude, that all is right, all ſecurely ſafe between God and our ſouls.

Hence ſuch ſwarms of good ſort of people, who cannot for the life of them diſcover any ill they have done; their conſcience is not troubled with the burden of any notorious ſins; their conduct is extremely regular, and outwardly decent; they are withal far from being ill-natured, and are rather peaceable, harmleſs, and obliging. Thus, after leading an inſipid, unmeaning life, their hopes are founded upon the mercy of God, tho' they are ſtrangers to the *only* way in which that mercy can be ſhewn.

A mo-

A modeſt queſtion, therefore, one may, for the ſake of ſuch perſons, be allowed to aſk. Where did they pick up ſuch a wild, incoherent, romantic ſyſtem of thinking? Not from the Bible, I am certain, becauſe that diſdains ſuch a doctrine. To avoid further trouble, the opinion we are now cenſuring is the offspring of ignorance and careleſſneſs, begotten by idleneſs, and reared by the complying hand of convenience.

For a poor fallen creature, however upright its moral conduct, to talk of doing no ill, is impious madneſs; 'tis ſetting aſide the neceſſity of Chriſt's death, and therefore little ſhort of downright blaſphemy.

Know we the ſpirituality of the divine law? Know we that it reaches the very thoughts and ſecret intents of the heart? Know we that a ſin, though but in idea, is yet, in the ſight of God, as much a ſin as if actually committed? If this be indeed the caſe; that is, if there is truth in Jehovah: if, I ſay, this be the caſe, a little boſom converſation will convince us, that ſcarce an hour, nay, ſcarce a ſecond, elapſes, without our incurring the divine diſpleaſure by a breach of one or all of his commands.

I have

I have no deſign to terrify, and ſhall not therefore preſent to your view a naked human heart; but if the declaration of Chriſt may be relied upon, it abounds in evil continually. Read but from the 21ſt verſe of the 7th chapter, in St. Mark's goſpel, where our Lord particularly ſets forth its wickedneſs.

Aye, but (ſay you) God is merciful, and will therefore forgive. Yes: but the Scripture declares you totally miſtake the matter. It aſſerts him to be ſtrictly juſt, as well as benevolent. In conſequence of this rigid juſtice, no ſin, even in thought, can eſcape unpuniſhed. Was it permitted to paſs with impunity, he would ceaſe to be God.

Mercy on us! you are ready to cry; who then can, in the nature of things, be ſaved? Why, true, here is the knot which divine wiſdom alone could, and did untie.

Chriſt ſuffered the puniſhment for all thoſe ſins we cannot but commit. Hence all who, convinced of their wretchedneſs, and renouncing every other reliance, fly to him for ſhelter, have nothing

nothing to fear. Sinners, after their utmoſt caution, they will ſtill remain; unprofitable ſervants they muſt ever be. But ſuch involuntary errors, as, through the weakneſs or vileneſs of our nature, we daily commit, Place them, ſays the bleſſed Jeſus, to my account: Should, at the great day of retribution, divine juſtice make any demand, I the Saviour have written it with my blood; I will repay it.

This is the goſpel ſcheme of redemption; this only preſerves the proper harmony of the divine attributes. Juſtice is not obſtructed; mercy exerts itſelf; the penitent ſinner is pardoned; and the whole contrivance redounds to the glory of the ſacred Trinity. 'Tis no encouragement to ſin, any more than receiving a benefit excites a man to fly in the face, or groſsly inſult his benefactor.

The ineffectuality, therefore, of every other ſcheme to promote our ſalvation, ſhould weigh with, and thoroughly perſuade all ſober-thinking men, who wiſh well to their ſouls, to become real and ſincere Chriſtians. This is what we mean by the glorious word Redemption! This is that goſpel St. Paul denounces a heavy curſe upon all who

who neglect to preach. Hence we dare not tell you a rhodomontade ſtory about civility, or complaiſance. We are miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt; our all's at ſtake; and have nothing to do with any thing but redemption by the blood of God.

For this the old world was created, was deſtroyed, and was renewed again. For this Noah was preſerved, and Abraham called to be the father of the bleſſing. For this the old patriarchs renounced the world, and were ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth. In defence of this truth, the apoſtles journeyed, gave up their eaſe in life, and, together with an innumerable company of martyrs, bled at the ſtake.

Be not, therefore, my friends, baffled out of your inheritance. In right of our elder brother, Chriſt, we are as much heirs to the kingdom of heaven as the firſt-born is lawful heir to his father's eſtate.

This, ſay you, is very right; but—but what? Why, the world. Well, what of that? 'Tis a globe, floating, like many others, in ambient air. 'Tis like a bubble blown through a ſtraw, that ſoon muſt break, and diſappear.

But its riches——Are incapable of affording ſolid happineſs.

Well, then, its pleaſures——Cloy by repetition, and are only ſought after for want of knowing how to employ our time better.

But ſure its honours——Are like itſelf, a vapour, fumes to feed vanity.

Yes; but long, ſay you, have I been wedded to ſuch nonſenſe. Then is there the more need of your being inſtantly diſentangled from the affairs of this life. Was I but ſure of forgiveneſs. Are you ſure Chriſt died? Certainly, there is no doubt about that. Then, ſo ſure can there be no doubt but he will pardon all who apply to him for ſalvation. Yes; but I have been a moſt dreadful ſinner. Become, therefore, the more eminent penitent. But what will my former acquaintance think? Why, deem you perhaps a madman, or an enthuſiaſt. What of that? Will their opinions ſave or condemn you at the judgment-ſeat of Chriſt? Let, therefore, nothing diſſuade you from being, and that without delay, a ſincere, humble dependant upon Chriſt for mercy.

A Chriſtian

A Chriſtian is the higheſt ſtyle, the greateſt honour, man can, in this life, arrive at. A Chriſtian is the only perſon of real honour, becauſe he dare not impoſe upon the ignorance or credulity of his brother. He is the only *true* friend, becauſe he dare not be inſincere; and he is the beſt, becauſe the moſt inſtructive, improving companion.

A Chriſtian is the moſt benevolent, becauſe himſelf a penſioner on the benevolence of Chriſt: he lives upon his bounty, breathes by his permiſſion, and is a debtor for his little all to the mercy of his deareſt Redeemer. He is alſo the moſt induſtrious, becauſe he only, of all men, knows the ineſtimable value of an hour.

Does the Syren Pleaſure charm with her melodious voice? Apply to our incarnate God for the ſoft, ſtill voice, that whiſpers to the ſoul refined peace, high-flavoured delight, and delicate joy in the Holy Ghoſt.

Are riches the object of your admiration? More than ſea and air, more than earth or water can produce, is the lot of thoſe who love the Lord Jeſus, to whom the world, and all things therein, belong.

Are you a votary to ambition? Conſider, with the eye of reaſon, your high birth and illuſtrious deſcent. 'Tis no exaggeration to ſay we are, by blood, related to the King of Heaven: and if as heartily attached to him as courtiers are to their earthly monarchs, we ſhall hereafter be admitted of his council, dive into his ſecrets, and almoſt ſink beneath the weight of an immortal crown of glory.

And now what more ſhall we, what more need we ſay? Chriſt is the forgiveneſs of ſins, the healer of all our maladies, the diſtributer of every bleſſing, the terror of the wicked, the joy of the righteous, the life of them that believe, and the reſurrection of the dead.

Chriſtianity, therefore, is the all, the every thing by which we can eſtimate great or mean, baſe or noble. All other diſtinctions are fallacious. Death, which puts out the glories of the world; death, which ſtrips us of our maſk of fleſh, beams comfort to the Chriſtian; his ſoul darts forward on the wing, eager to embrace its Saviour and its God in the high ſunſhine, illuſtrious blaze of eternal day.

Theſe are privileges the meaneſt may obtain, by being perſuaded not to be almoſt, but altogether and entirely, ſincere Chriſtians, ſincere followers of that Jeſus who will ſoon pronounce the joyful invitation, worth ten thouſand worlds.

Since, when upon earth, you yielded to the force of truth; ſince you confeſſed yourſelf a ſinner, and relied upon me for mercy; ſince you was wrought upon, and perſuaded to worſhip and love me only; to ſhew you that my promiſes, my word may be entirely relied upon; come, my ever dear friends; come, ye bleſſed children of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared on purpoſe for you, from even before the creation of the world.

SERMON VI.

The Consideration of a future Judgment the most powerful Incentive to a religious Life.

SERMON VI.

The Consideration of a future Judgment the most powerful Incentive to a religious Life.

SERMON VI.

St. John, Chap. v. Ver. 28, 29.

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice,

And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

OUR bleſſed Lord, having performed a moſt miraculous cure upon a lame and impotent cripple, incurs the hatred and diſpleaſure of the Jews, becauſe he had done this beneficent and humane action on the Sabbath day,

In vindication of himſelf, he pleads, that he had herein only imitated his heavenly Father, who never made any diſtinctions of this kind where the good of his creatures was at all concerned. My Father, ſays he, worketh hitherto, omits no opportunity of doing ſuch offices and ſervices to mankind, as well on the Sabbath as other days, as may contribute to their happineſs; and I myſelf thus work, I do the ſame: I came into the world in order to ſerve the bodies, as well as ſouls of men.

Not, however, content with this anſwer, they rather ſuppoſe him more culpable in making himſelf equal with God.

This our Lord ſhews to be an injurious charge, by declaring, that, as a man, he cannot do theſe mighty works; that it is only by the power of his divinity they are performed: but that, by his thus being united to the Deity, he poſſeſſes that incommunicable perfection of having life in himſelf.

On which account he, though a man, is to be honoured equally with the Father: that all judgment, as well as power, in heaven and earth, will be committed unto him only.

Upon

Upon their expreſſing a great ſurpriſe at this declaration; Marvel not, Do not, ſays he, ſeem aſtoniſhed at this, becauſe the hour is coming, will very ſoon approach, when all that are in their graves ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God, and ſhall come forth; they that have done good, unto the reſurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the reſurrection of damnation.

Here, my friends, a ſubject preſents itſelf to our conſideration, the moſt awful, the moſt important, and the moſt ſerious, that can poſſibly occupy the mind of man.

The want of having this continually before our eyes, and neareſt our hearts, is certainly the chief cauſe of that inundation of vice, ſin, and folly, that overſpreads the world.

The great and opulent baniſh it from their imagination. The middling orders chuſe, in this, as well as other vicious modes, to copy the example of their ſuperiors in ſtation, whilſt it ſeems to be the profeſſed principle of the vulgar to diveſt themſelves of every thought, but what they enjoy in common with the beaſts that periſh.

We

We weekly repeat, that Chriſt ſhall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead; but we ſuffer it not to have the proper weight or influence upon our minds. Each of us hath a favourite ſomething, the purſuit of which engages all our time, and engroſſes our whole attention.

Beſides, the example of all with whom we converſe is a powerful means to keep us from ever even dreaming about ſuch ſubjects.

Among the frequent viſits we make, things of this nature never become a topic of converſation. An attempt to introduce them would be looked upon as a ſpecies of ill-breeding, and we ſhould be counted only ſo many gloomy mortals, over-run with ſpleen, melancholy, and enthuſiaſm.

But the truth is, we have as little inclination to dwell upon ſuch momentous points as our companions.

Fixing a faſhion, deciding upon the merit of a public performer, and regularly attending the diverſions of the ſeaſon, is ſufficient employment for the one ſex; whilſt wealth, power and ambition,

are

are objects that equally chain down the attention of the other.

Not that theſe things are, in themſelves, either ſinful or erroneous, unleſs when they occupy and take poſſeſſion of the whole man, to the utter excluſion of the one thing truly neceſſary, which, as followers of Chriſt, ought to be the leading principle of our lives.

We are called by his name; we profeſs to rely upon him only for ſalvation; we, every Sabbath, hear the moſt important paſſages in his goſpels; we ſeem to make no manner of doubt of their being true; and yet are we each intent upon the conduct of others; and comfort ourſelves with thinking we ſhall at leaſt ſtand as good a chance as the generality of the world.

All things tend to infatuate, and lull us into a fatal and deſtructive ſecurity.

When young and healthy, a probable appearance of many years to come we dextrouſly convert into a certainty, and wiſely ſuppoſe ſome future, and very remote period, will be full ſoon enough

enough ſeriouſly to reflect upon a reſurrection to eternal life, or endleſs miſery.

When ripened into manhood, ſtill have we ſomething to accompliſh, ſome ſcheme to bring to perfection, which, when completed, then are we determined to prepare for that hour, in which our ſoul ſhall be required at our hands.

When Time has ſnowed upon our heads, when feeble Nature demands both reſpite and relaxation, Chriſtian piety, not having been the ſerious buſineſs of our younger years, we halt, as it were, between God and the world.

Dread of the impending hour our feelings declare to be at hand, one moment drives us to prayer and ſupplication; whilſt long habit, and the force of cuſtom, occaſion us, at another, to caſt a wiſhful look after thoſe enjoyments we are rendered incapable of being partakers of.

Hence, to the diſgrace of Chriſtianity, I had almoſt ſaid humanity, we but too frequently ſee remnants of men, who are deprived of the power, but, in full vigour, retain the will of ſinning.

Who,

Who, in ſpite of their pains, their weakneſs, or their years, ſpur on the ſluggiſh appetite, and, with an aukward grace, act over again thoſe follies youth and inexperience only can plead an excuſe for.

The apoſtles of our Lord were very aſſiduous in repreſenting to their hearers the dreadful change they were ſo ſpeedily to undergo: they loſt no time in earneſtly beſeeching them ſpeedily to prepare for the great and terrible day of the Lord.

In this they were countenanced by their friend and maſter, who, as well as his forerunner, urged the neceſſity of repentance, becauſe the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

Hence the holy Evangeliſts knew not what it was to have a moment unemployed. Hence, ſuch as flew for ſhelter to the Saviour of the world; ſuch as heartily embraced the goſpel in the early ages of the Church, had ſo ſtrong, ſo operative a ſenſe of the reſurrection, that it was the chief ſcope, aim, and tendency of all their actions, to render them acceptable in this final hour.

They

They well weighed even the minuteſt buſineſs, before ever they were prevailed upon to undertake it. The queſtion with theſe Chriſtians, who added luſtre, and did honour to their profeſſion; the queſtion was not, What pecuniary advantage, what preſent pleaſure, what eſteem, or what praiſe ſhall I procure to myſelf by ſuch an action? but, How will it ſtand the teſt? how will it bear the impartial ſcrutiny of the Judge of quick and dead? Can I, in this particular, vindicate my conduct to the ſearcher of hearts, when ſummoned from my grave to live or die eternally? Can I ſafely abide by his deciſion, when falſe excuſes, pitiful evaſions, or conditional reſerves, ſhall, with the father of lies, to whom they are nearly related, be baniſhed into the regions of utter darkneſs? If this, ſaid they, is really the caſe, we are ready to exert the whole of our abilities in the propoſed undertaking. But if there remains even a ſhadow of a doubt, that our Maſter may, when diſtributing the purchaſed rewards to his ſervants, cenſure or condemn us, we hazard not our ſouls, or hold his diſpleaſure in ſo cheap an eſtimation. We are no caſuiſts, nor need we the aſſiſtance of ſuch, to explain away, or refine upon, the legality or ſinfulneſs of an action.

We

We profeſs to be guided only by that ſhare of common underſtanding with which Chriſt hath ſufficiently endowed all his creatures.

To the wiſe, the learned, and logical heads, we leave the glorious taſk of proving, by playing upon words, wrong to be right, and right to be wrong; the ſame action highly criminal in one ſex, or at one period, that is not ſo in the other.

We know that it is wholly owing to the love of Chriſt we are permitted to a further trial. We alſo know this life to be, ſhort as it is, that on which our all depends. We have no ſecond hope, and therefore too highly eſteem this, to run any the leaſt riſque. Talk not, therefore, to us of riches, honour, or pleaſure; we too well know their nature; they weigh not in our ſcales a feather; nor ſhall we make the ſalutary, wholeſome, beneficial inſtructions of our adored Saviour, bend to their fickle, mutable, and fantaſtic natures.

This was the reaſoning of a catalogue of truly Chriſtian heroes, of whom, as St. Paul juſtly obſerves, the world was not worthy.

This was that perfection of judgment, that right underſtanding, which we ſhould all copy after, and eagerly aſpire to.

This is the true ſtandard of right and wrong, vice or piety, to which we ſhould have a conſtant reference when we would meaſure or know the genuine nature of our actions.

And, had we even no ſuch examples as thoſe referred to; if we truly believe the words of Jeſus Chriſt; if we have no manner of doubt but that he will, by his almighty power, raiſe our mouldered bodies from the grave; if we really think that this body, as well as ſoul of ours, muſt live hereafter, live for ever; if this is, in truth, our opinion; that is, if we do not imagine God to be a liar, common reflection ſhould ſupply the place of both precept and example.

In every occurrence of life we are, for the general, ſharp ſighted. and keen enough to diſcern wherein our true good conſiſts.

Nature alſo, which prompts us to ſhun pain and miſery, is commonly fruitful in preſenting us with expedients to avoid them.

But

But in affairs of infinitely greater conſequence, where nothing leſs than extreme and endleſs miſery, or an eternal weight of glory, awaits us, here are we dull, ſtupid, lethargic, and unfeeling: here we can perceive, with a witneſs, the dreadful effects of our firſt parents tranſgreſſion.

To the corruption of our nature are we indebted for this egregious ſottiſhneſs; to this is it owing that we can ſecurely nod, even when more than deſtruction hovers over, and ſurrounds us.

To this we are obliged for that happy art of eternally deceiving ourſelves, in which we are all ſuch eminent proficients.

This it is that renders us liable to have our better judgment continually baffled and impoſed upon by every ſhameful, paltry excuſe: Such as, the probability, from youth or health, that we ſhall live ſome few years longer. This we turn to ſterling account, argue upon, and act as if the thing was infallibly true.

We are deaf to its extreme uncertainty, which ſhould lead us to be conſtantly prepared, and

ever on our guard. We chuſe not to look at the numbers, equally healthy, vigorous and robuſt, that are daily dropping around us. This we call a very melancholy proſpect; and ſo it, in reality, is. But ought it not to be an uſeful one? Who knows but the meagre tyrant may have marked us out as the moſt proper object for his next attack?

Should this not be the caſe, repentance, we are told in ſacred ſcripture, is the gift of God only.

Is he, then, ſo laviſh of this important treaſure, that, whenever we pleaſe, we can demand it? If not, delay argues a ſpecies of more than madneſs.

Beſides, what is the real meaning of a death-bed preparation, when tranſlated into the language of truth?

Doth it not run, in general, thus? "From my "feelings, I have great reaſon to believe my diſ- "ſolution approaches. That it would come ſo "ſoon, I did not expect. If I muſt leave the "world, (though much I wiſh the hour was poſt- "poned) but if I muſt leave it, Lord Jeſus, have "mercy upon me."

What

What is this but the language of ſlaviſh, ſervile fear? Where it is otherways; where it really proceeds from an awakened conviction; where ſorrow and contrition are the genuine motives, it is accompanied with agonies too dreadful to deſcribe, and which I hope we, my friends, never ſhall experience.

In ſhort, our ſouls, as well as bodies, have their maladies; but they are of the moral kind, and are only to be healed by that ſpiritual phyſician, whoſe preſcriptions are ever attended with ſure ſucceſs.

Hence it comes to paſs, that the powerful arguments of death, judgment, and a reſurrection from the gloomy manſions of the tomb, ſerve only as ſo many opiates; whilſt an hint about any thing that concerns our limbs, health, or property, makes us, in an inſtant, have all our ſenſes about us; we are active and alert, we haſten to enquire the means, and loſe not a moment to uſe them, to avert the dreaded calamity.

Whereas, God knows, the dangers bear not even the moſt diſtant proportion.

Equally diſſimilar are the images; the one being faint, trivial, and temporary; the other ſtrong, laſting, awful, and eternal.

The very deſcription of the general judgment, as recorded in the book of God, is enough to make one's hair ſtand on end. "And I beheld, (ſays St. John) and lo! there was a great earthquake, and the ſun became black, and the moon became as blood, and the ſtars of heaven fell unto the earth, and the heaven departed as a ſcroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and iſland were moved out of their places; and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond man, and every free man, hid themſelves in the dens and holes of the mountains; and ſaid to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that ſitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come, and who ſhall be able to ſtand?"

Here we have a juſt picture of the true ſublime.

The

The thing itſelf being the moſt dreadfully ſolemn that can befal the world, affects us with a painful, pleaſing kind of horror.

The beauties of nature, the muſical harmony of the world, the noble and regular adjuſtment of the heavenly bodies, and the innumerable ſpangles a night-ſcene unfolds, ſtrike the mind of even a vulgar beholder with a ſenſe of grandeur and magnificence.

To think, therefore, that their order ſhall be broke in upon, their motions be ſtopped, their lights quenched, and each, quitting its orbit, ſhall drop to the centre, there to form a promiſcuous maſs of confuſion; to think but of this, gives one a ſenſation by no means pleaſing.

When lulled in the ſoft lap of downy pleaſure, the giddy, gay, and thoughtleſs, are reclined in feſtive bowers; when, ſeduced by ſportive fancy, the ambitious are crowned with honours, and view a tribe of vaſſals proſtrate at their feet; when the votary to gold is ſurrounded with projects to bankrupt a nation; when, tired with the toils of the day, honeſt induſtry, the child of fervent

piety,

piety, peaceably enjoys the benefit ſleep was deſigned to afford; when a ſolemn ſilence reigns; when all things look like death; at midnight, 'tis preſumed, the general judgment will take place. Peals, loud peals of thunder, rend the ſkies; the lightenings flaſh, and dart from pole to pole: the living, ſtarting from their couch, and beating their brow aloft, ſhall die with fear: the tremendous voice of God pierces through the centre of the earth, and makes the very creation ſhake again.

The ſilent dead obey the ſummons. Slowly do ſome ariſe. Here you have a black, ſullen ſoul, curſing the day that called him forth, and wiſhing for an eternal grave to hide his guilty head. There you have an hideous group; their very eye-balls roll deſpair; their hearts bleed with anguiſh; their veins throb again; their knees ſmite each other; their teeth chatter, and gnaſh together; their faces are ſcarcely human; an helliſh fury, horror and gloom, overſpreads each countenance.

They ſee, among the number of the bleſſed, perhaps an aged parent, whoſe dying admonitions they

they rejected, and contemned. Perhaps a ſon, once the darling and delight of their ſoul; perhaps the fond, the faithful, the affectionate partner of their joys and cares. Many a ſilent night ſhe ſpent in grief; many a prayer ſhe ardently put up for him, who only fruſtrated the grace of God. They ſee, perhaps, a brother, ſiſter, or a friend.

The Judge proceeds to ſentence; their heart-ſtrings crack; their eyes ſtream with tears; their horrid groans re-echo through the world; their piercing cries plead with the righteous Saviour for compaſſion, whilſt their conſciences allow the juſtice of the doom. But, "Oh! (ſay they) muſt "it, muſt it be for ever? The laſt, the only "favour we beg, is, that after ten times ten thou-"ſand years are expired, we may be reſtored to "thy preſence."

Once, however, having trodden under foot the blood of Chriſt, there remains no other hope, or method, of redemption. Therefore, Go, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared, (ſays the benevolent Jeſus) not originally for you, for men, but for the devil, and his followers. But, as ye have rendered

rendered yourſelves unfit for my preſence, go and enjoy the companions ye have choſen.

But it is time, high time, to ſhift the ſhocking ſcene.

View, then, the ſons of light and immortality; ſee what a divine, a majeſtic grace, is transfuſed through their whole deportment.

Their faces, like that of Moſes, when he deſcended from the mount, ſhine again with the refulgent ſplendor of God. Together with all the ranſomed of the Lord, they return with joy, and a general ſhout of thankſgiving.

Lift, therefore, up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlaſting doors, and give the King of glory, with his ſplendid retinue, to come in. Who is the King of glory? He, who gave his followers power to triumph over death, hell, and the grave.

Here is, my brethren, the only ſovereign antidote to ſin; this is the effectual counterpoiſe to every kind of temptation.

Wealth,

Wealth, honour, and even beauty, will ſolicit us in vain. Large are the draughts of happineſs you promiſe. Granting even that you will make good theſe pompous offers, little would it avail: ſhort is the time we can poſſeſs you; for ſoon, very ſoon, will the hour come, when all that are in their graves ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God, and ſhall come forth; they that have done good, unto the reſurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the reſurrection of damnation eternal. In this hour, therefore, hear, protect, and ſave us, Lord Jeſus, we humbly entreat thee. Amen.

SER-

SERMON VII.

Religious Love and Univerſal Benevolence explained, and ſhewn to be the true Source of every Chriſtian Duty.

BRITISH MUSEUM

SERMON VII.

St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Chap. xiii, latter Part of Verse 10.

Therefore Love is the fulfilling of the Law.

SEVERAL persons at Rome having been converted to the gospel of our blessed Lord, were, in sentiments, greatly divided amongst themselves concerning the means whereby they were to be justified, or have their sins blotted out in the sight of God.

Some Jewish doctors had fomented and spread these differences, by declaring, that although Jesus was really the Saviour promised in the Old Testament; yet, to be absolved from our sins, and receive mercy at the hand of God, besides believ-

ing in him, a certain obſervance of ſome part of the ceremonial law was abſolutely neceſſary.

This occaſioned the apoſtle to write his Letter or Epiſtle to the Romans; wherein he ſtrenuouſly combats this opinion, by declaring, that all who rely upon the Lord Jeſus only for ſalvation, ſhall receive pardon, forgiveneſs. The aid of the Holy Spirit here, and a reſurrection to eternal life and happineſs hereafter. In his own words, by the works of the law ſhall no man be juſtified, but by faith in Chriſt Jeſus.

He then concludes his Epiſtle with giving them ſome excellent and neceſſary directions for their conduct: ſuch as, that they ſhould not be over attached to this world; that they ſhould be very humble, not having their eyes intent upon the glittering gewgaws of life, but condeſcend and ſtoop to men of the loweſt condition; that they ſhould be conſtant in prayer to their adorable Redeemer for ſuch things as he might deem neceſſary for their ſouls or bodies; that they ſhould neglect no duty to their fellow-creatures, but ſhould ſincerely and mutually love each other; for love is the fulfilling of the law.

As

As if he had ſaid, " My beloved brethren, I " find there be ſome amongſt you, who take every " opportunity to diſturb that repoſe, peace, joy, " and comfort, which ye have in Chriſt Jeſus. " They know you are ready to perform whatever " is truly neceſſary for the ſalvation of your ſouls, " they therefore are weak enough to wiſh to im- " poſe upon you an obſervance of ſome parts of " the ceremonial law. That there is not the leaſt " neceſſity for this, I have endeavoured to prove " in the former part of my letter. I ſhall now " add, that I even think it needleſs for you to " trouble your heads about thoſe commandments " that are called moral: they were given at a " particular time, on a particular occaſion, and for " a particular end only; but were never deſigned to " be the teſt of vice or piety amongſt Chriſtians; " becauſe it is the firſt principle of ſuch perſons " to love the Lord Jeſus with a fervent ſincerity, " and all mankind as brethren. Whilſt therefore " you do this, you muſt keep the commandments, " you muſt act properly in ſociety; you cannot " commit adultery, becauſe it would be doing a " great injury to your fellow Chriſtian, whom you " love too well to hurt: you cannot deprive a

" man

" man of life if you love him as you ought: you " cannot ſteal or take awway a man's property; " becauſe he that loves truly knows not what it is " to envy a man any thing he enjoys: and, in " ſhort, love compleatly and perfectly fulfils " every law that is neceſſary for us to obſerve, " whilſt we live together as men in ſociety in " this world.

" If you aſk, How it does this? I anſwer, be- " cauſe love worketh no ill to his neighbour, pre- " vents a man from ever doing an injury, but always " inclines him to do every good office to a poor " fellow Chriſtian in real diſtreſs: therefore is it " the fulfilling and perfection of the law."

This ſeems, in a ſmall compaſs, to compriſe the intention and real deſign of the holy apoſtle, in his Epiſtle to the Romans: the reaſoning of which, being in ſome places rather difficult and obſcure, has occaſioned many truly pious ſervants of Chriſt to fall into very great miſtakes.

As love is ſaid to be that in which is contained all our religious, moral and relative duties, as men

and

and as Chriſtians; it may not be improper to dwell upon and make it a ſubject of contemplation for our preſent moments.

The wonderful diſplay of the wiſdom and power of God in the creation; the admirable ſtructure of animals; the beautiful arrangement of the vegetable world; the ample proviſion he has made both for the ſupport and happineſs of every creature who inhabits this globe, from the higheſt and moſt exalted being, down to the meaneſt and moſt abject reptile: theſe are convincing proofs, that the unſeen hand who regulates and directs the great machine, muſt be powerful beyond conception, great beyond idea, wiſe beyond the reach of human capacity to comprehend, bountiful and loving beyond all bounds of affection. To ſpeak in his own language, his tender mercy muſt be continually over all his works.

To think, therefore, that we are the creatures of his hands; that he called us forth from yeſterday, out of nothing; that he has endowed us with various abilities, to perceive, think upon, and be delighted with his wonders; that by his bounty we live from day to day. To reflect on theſe things,

is enough to make us, if we have any feeling, love and adore ſo wonderfully excellent a Being.

But, to open the volume of Revelation; to obſerve the further manifeſtations of his goodneſs; to ſee the ſurpriſing method that has been taken to redeem fallen and ſinful man; to trace the gradual accompliſhment of this great event, undertaken and completed by our eternal God and Saviour Chriſt Jeſus; to think that this glorious, compaſſionate Being, has left nothing undone to ſave us from eternal ruin; that his ineſtimable blood has been ſpilt in our cauſe; to conſider, that he now only waits for our ſincere converſion, in order to adorn our heads with a crown of glory. In ſhort, that there are ſtill future bleſſings in ſtore for us; the perception of which will render us ſuperlatively happy for all eternity; as it is written, Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither has it ever entered the heart of man to conceive the things that our indulgent Saviour has prepared for them that love him. To think, my brethren, with a proper degree of attention upon theſe momentous and conſequential truths, muſt ſurely melt the moſt ſavage heart into a filial love and affection to ſuch a ſuper-excellent Redeemer.

Conceive

Conceive but in your mind, a man diſtreſſed, friendleſs, forlorn, and wretched; ſurrounded with difficulties, without the ſhadow of relief, oppreſſed with evils he can neither fly from nor avoid; and Hope, the common attendant of even the moſt miſerable, to have failed and deſerted him.

In this ſituation, which you'll allow to be truly deplorable, a ſtranger, a perſon from whom ſuch kindneſs is not to be expected, enquires into the circumſtances of the caſe, ſecretly relieves the wants, and thoroughly extricates, from every difficulty, the poor, deſponding wretch.

Thus delivered, let every feeling, humane, grateful heart, determine the ſenſations ſuch a man muſt undergo: a gratitude too big for utterance weighs down his ſpirits: the very power of language is for ſome time denied him wherewith to thank his deliverer; and this at length ſubſides into a love, and warmth of affection, that eagerly ſeizes every opportunity of breaking forth into action. He ſtudies the very looks and features of his friend, and omits no trifling incident that can give him the leaſt ſatisfaction.

In this metaphor, which falls in every reſpect infinitely ſhort of the end for which it was produced, we yet ſee that there is little or no occaſion for a man ſo obliged to treaſure up a ſtring of rules and precepts, as a guide to his conduct. No: love will become the general and unerring Director of all his actions.

Now this is preciſely the caſe with true and genuine religion. This alſo marks the difference between that and a dull ſlaviſh formality.

A man who has the word of God clearly explained to him, and who implicitly believes its divine authority, cannot but ſee that a laborious pains, if I may ſo ſpeak, has been taken for the good of man. He cannot but ſee, that to redeem a loſt world, the tremendous Majeſty of heaven condeſcended to be cloathed in human fleſh. In ſhort, that ten thouſand times more has been done by Chriſt for the good of his ſoul, than can in this life be conceived.

If therefore ſuch a man thinks juſtly; if Divine Grace has opened his eyes, and penetrated his heart with an humble, grateful, thankful ſenſe of

theſe unmerited bounties; the conſequence is, that love to his dear Redeemer will be the grand and leading principle of all his actions, both private and public; and as it is the never-failing nature of this paſſion, to long for and be happy in the company or enjoyment of the object it eſteems; ſo will it be the conſtant endeavour of ſuch a man to obtain as complete a knowledge of his Saviour as his imperfect nature will permit. He will wiſh to be more and more like him in thought and affections; for which reaſon he will rarely fail to attend, with regularity, the public prayers and ſacraments of the church.

Theſe he knows are in themſelves of no value, but are only means appointed by Chriſt to amend the heart, and enable us to grow daily in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.

In ſhort, precepts to ſuch a man will be almoſt uſeleſs. The common topics which the common books of piety and morality furniſh, will ſtand him in very little ſtead.

Chriſtianity, as recorded in the Bible, properly digeſted, and well underſtood, will ſecure him from eſſential errors; and the prin-

principle of grateful love to his Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, will influence even the private thoughts and intents of his heart, much more his outward conduct and actions. Thus will he endeavour to fulfil every law of piety and worſhip, ſtimulated by the nobleſt of principles, ſincere affection.

Here then, my brethren, you have a juſt picture of vital, operative, ſaving Chriſtianity.

It is founded upon gratitude, the moſt honourable of our feelings. It is a religion fit for a man, and for a ſinner.

When it thus leads captive our heart; thus conquers, ſubdues and regulates our affections, it gives an intrinſic worth and excellence to even our moſt indifferent actions: we are generous without parade; humble, but not mean; honeſt without reſerve; brave, but not fool-hardy; honourable without deſign.

But when contrary to this, we are Chriſtians in name only; when the heart is little, if at all, affected; when we go to church, becauſe it happens to be the cuſtom of the country in which we

live,

live, and are ſure never to be ſeen there the latter part of the day, for fear we ſhould be thought in earneſt; beſides, it is unpolite, and quite out of vogue amongſt thoſe whom we call people of faſhion; when we are content with the form and neglect the power of godlineſs; are quite ſatisfied, ſo we live regular, ſober, decent, and free from any atrocious act, not conſidering that this may be owing to conſtitution, bodily complexion, habit, or refined education; when we repeat the capital articles upon which our ſalvation depends, juſt as a ſchool-boy does his leſſon, and underſtand no more of the matter than what we have picked up at ſchool or in the nurſery: when we think, that becauſe we have been baptized, and belong to this or that church, are called after this or that ſect or party, all is ſafe and right; God is a moſt merciful Being, and therefore, though we cannot tell why or how, we ſhall certainly be happy after death: when this is the caſe; when ſuch flimſy ſtuff is ſubſtituted in the place of the all-atoning blood of our great High Prieſt; no wonder religion, that is, the form of it, becomes ſo tedious and irkſome: no wonder we grow dull, heavy, and yawn over prayers we enter not into the ſpirit of: no wonder we prefer

any

any place to the houſe of God, any day to the Sabbath, or any company to the great and mighty Jeſus.

The truth is, that, not having ſeriouſly conſidered the benefits we enjoy by his paſſion, we love him not in the manner that we ought; for it is arrant nonſenſe to talk of eſteeming a perſon we are endeavouring to run away from, and avoid.

Thus deficient with reſpect to God, our affection for mankind muſt decreaſe, and be leſſened, in a proportional manner.

It is contracted within the ſmall diſtrict of our friends, or kindred. It may, perhaps be extended to our acquaintance, but ſeldom comprehends the whole ſpecies or ſociety of fellow-rationals. And yet, next to the love of our God and Saviour, this is the chief commandment.

That we are formed by the Author of Nature for ſociety, the power of ſpeech, the ſtructure of our parts, and the very make of our bodies, ſufficiently indicate. That there are relative duties ariſing from this our mutual communion with each other, is equally manifeſt and apparent.

Reaſon

Reaſon alſo corroborates apoſtolic authority in pronouncing love to mankind to be the trueſt, moſt effectual, and beſt motive, to excite us to diſcharge the ſervices we, by nature, owe them.

The religion of Jeſus teaches us to look upon all men without diſtinction; not only as having one common parent with ourſelves, but alſo, as being fellow-ranſomed, and fellow-redeemed brethren; creatures born for the ſame end, travelling the ſame journey, climbing the ſame craggy aſcent; and yet poſting, as faſt as the wings of Time can carry them, to the ſame awful habitation.

Hence does the Goſpel repeatedly exhort us to charity; by which we are not to underſtand alms-giving, but a general and diffuſive love of every one, as our brother in Chriſt.

Imagine a man thrown, by ſome fatal accident, on a foreign ſhore.

Suppoſe him, for ſeveral years, deprived of even a glimpſe of his own ſpecies.

In,

In an unexpected hour, ſurprize him, by preſenting to his view a man like himſelf; judge the ſudden effuſion of joy and tranſport he muſt feel, and you will better conceive, than my pen can deſcribe, what is meant by αγαπη, which, for want of a better word, we render Charity; of which ſuch excellent things are ſpoken, that St. Paul declares, though he could ſpeak with the eloquence of an angel, had the gift of prophecy, was expert in the nobleſt myſteries, and excelled in the ſublimeſt knowledge; nay, though he gave all his property to feed the poor, or his body to be burned, and poſſeſſed not this divine philanthropy, or principle of love, he was yet a mere nothing, a ſound without a meaning.

As, therefore, all the ſocial laws of our holy religion tend to the good of mankind, well might the apoſtle pronounce love to be the fulfilling of this law, inaſmuch as it only wiſhes the happineſs of every individual of which the whole of our ſpecies is compoſed.

From ſome anatomical experiments upon the human body, a moſt excellent and penetrating moraliſt* of our own, has laid down ſeveral valuable

* Vide Biſhop Cumberland de Legibus Naturæ, cap. 2.

able positions; such as, that those things which are peculiar to man (besides weeping) occasion his heart and bowels to be more strongly moved, or more variously affected, with joy or sorrow, than other animals.

This he supposes to be so ordered by God, that we may be more strongly stimulated to promote the good of others, since we thereby perceive our own felicity more powerfully heightened than that of other animals.

But this, my dear brethren, demands an apology, being only so much solemn trifling, and, therefore, wide of the mark.

It has, I hope, sufficiently appeared, not only that love to God and man is, but also, why it is, the fulfilling of all law, human and divine.

That the true cause of any man's deficiency in these points, is his being destitute of a proper degree of this amiable and divine principle.

Whether, as disciples of Christ, we have occasion for this affection; whether we ought to be truly

truly grateful, let any thinking, feeling man, judge, who is informed, that to the bounty of Chriſt we are indebted for our daily bread.

Various are the comforts, various the bleſſings, various the conveniencies of life. I need not proceed to an induction of particulars, becauſe I propoſe not, in this diſcourſe, addreſſing myſelf to your paſſions.

Elſe might I remind you, that the quick circulation of your vital fluid, the elaſtic ſpring of your whole animal œconomy, which exhilarates your heart, and infuſes into your countenance the glow of health, was purchaſed for you with much, much pain and diſorder, by your friend who is in heaven.

I might convince you, that your riches are the fruits of his having ſubmitted to voluntary and extreme poverty.

Convenient, perhaps, and comfortable, are your habitations, deſigned as a defence and protection from the rude and boiſterous elements of ſurly Nature.

Leſs

Leſs comfortable it cannot ſurely make them, to whiſper in your ear this ſolemn truth: "That they alſo were purchaſed by your Saviour."

Many a dreary winter's night the rough tempeſt beat upon his poor, defenceleſs, head. Many a ſultry day, the ſcorching ſun-beams played around, and incommoded the bleſſed body of their Creator, whilſt he trod the burning ſand, to ſave, perhaps, a ſoul, to ſooth an aking heart, or heal a body much diſeaſed.

When Night's ſable curtain is let down, and feeble Nature calls for reſt, you ſpend, perhaps, the hours in ſweet refreſhing ſlumber: take then, friendly hearer, one ſhort leſſon to your couch: Forget not the divine hand, who cloſes thus your drooping lids.

The mount called Olivet can witneſs, that many an eve your dear Redeemer ſtretched, upon the moſſy ground, his ſacred limbs. Not becauſe he choſe a bed of earth; not becauſe he deſpiſed things comfortable; but becauſe, though in himſelf rich, yet, for our ſakes, he became poor and neceſſitous indeed.

As

As a man, great were his afflictions. Hear but the anſwer he made to one who wiſhed to abide with him: The foxes have their holes, the birds of the air have neſts proper for their quiet repoſe; but I, the Son of Man; I, the Lord of all, however weary, however harraſſed, however fatigued, either in mind or body, have not an houſe, or habitation, where I may lay my aching head.

The time would fail me to recount the ills he ſuffered; to run through the various ſorrows that harrowed up his ſoul.

Thoſe already touched upon are ſufficient to melt the hardeſt heart. But, when 'tis conſidered, that for us men, and for our ſalvation, he underwent this bloody ſcene of woe, the conſcious ſtars would grow dim, and loſe their luſtre; the ſun would put on a crimſon bluſh, and hide his head, were we ſuch monſters of ingratitude, as not, in return, to love him, who thus firſt ſo ardently loved us.

Impelled by ſo pure an affection, let us earneſtly ſet about, in thought and action, fulfilling his law.

From

From this moment let us be unanimouſly determined, that, as St. Paul ſays, neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor heighth, nor depth, nor any other creature, ſhall be ever able to ſeparate us from the love of God, which is in Chriſt Jeſus, our Lord.

SER-

SERMON VIII.

The Goſpel of Chriſt ſo beneficial to Mankind, that we ought to glory in, not be aſhamed of it.

SERMON VIII.

ST. PAUL to the ROMANS, Chap. i. Ver. 16.

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

THE great apostle to the gentiles, during his absence from the Christian converts who dwelt at Rome, writes unto them the epistle now before us.

He begins with recommending them to the grace and favour of Christ Jesus; assures them, that he never forgets to mention them with peculiar affection in his prayers to the Saviour of mankind; exults with thankfulness for the greatness of

their faith for which they are renowned throughout the world; intimates his earneſt deſire once more to ſee and comfort them; acknowledges himſelf their debtor, and profeſſes a readineſs to diſcharge the obligation, by preaching the goſpel even at Rome.

For do not, ſays he, imagine that I am in the leaſt intimidated by the ſuperior abilities of your philoſophers, notwithſtanding the acknowledged greatneſs of their capacities; notwithſtanding their profound reſearches; notwithſtanding their wiſdom, their learning, their rhetoric, or their eloquence; I am nevertheleſs far, very far, from being aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt, becauſe I know it to be the power of God unto ſalvation to every one qualified by faith and humility to receive it.

The apoſtle's aſſertion in this particular will afford ample reaſon for enquiring into the real nature of Chriſt's Goſpel, whereby we ſhall clearly diſcern how it is the power of God unto ſalvation; and that, ſo far from being aſhamed, it is in reality perhaps the only thing we can, without a crime, glory in or make a boaſt of.

The

The term by which this heavenly manifeſtation is called, bears, in the Greek, the ſame ſignification as the word by which it is rendered into our language.

Goſpel is derived from an Old Engliſh, or Saxon word, that literally ſignifies good or joyful news.

Hence it is properly deſcriptive of the glad, the glorious tidings of ſalvation, by the death and ſufferings of Chriſt Jeſus.

That there is in the world a great mixture of poſitive evil, is ſufficiently manifeſt to the ſenſes of every man.

That there is a conſiderable quantity of moral turpitude ariſing from actions in themſelves intrinſically wicked, is alſo evident beyond the poſſibility of a doubt.

That the natural bias of the human mind, unleſs reſtrained by reaſon or religion, leads a man to the practice of many vices, the experience, I ſuppoſe, of every one preſent, will ſufficiently teſtify.

Theſe

Theſe things being indiſputable, 'tis clear to demonſtration, that the nature of man is, ſome how or other, greatly depraved, and hideouſly corrupted.

That this could not proceed from God, is no leſs manifeſt; becauſe, as a Being perfectly good, and perfectly happy, he cannot be the author of evil, or unhappineſs.

To the Scripture, therefore, we can only refer, for a ſatisfactory ſolution of the difficulty. There we are informed, that man, affecting to be independent, and diſclaiming any reliance upon his Maker, loſt the rectitude of his mind, ſullied his reaſoning faculties, and, from a judgment too prone to err, filled the world with diſorderly confuſion, anxious inquietude, and a train of woes innumerable.

To prevent this dreadful cataſtrophe from plunging the human race into eternal ruin, the ſcheme of our redemption was planned by the Perſons in the Godhead; and, in the fulneſs of time, compleated, in all its parts, by the ſecond

By this wonderful œconomy, infinite Mercy made ſatisfaction to infinite Juſtice for the crimes of all mankind; infinite Love accepted the atonement, and graciouſly pardoned the offender: infinite power ſtood engaged to promote, carry on, and fulfil each article that tended to reſtore man to the favour of the Almighty, or further his eternal felicity.

Thus were the divine attributes harmonized, and man was admitted to a ſecond trial. The terms on his part to be performed, were rendered more eaſy; additional motives were added to love the Creator; and all our happineſs can be aſcribed to him only, who is the very fountain of love, goodneſs and benignity.

This, this is the Goſpel of Chriſt; this the redemption purchaſed for us by the blood of our incarnate God; this the ſource of every bleſſing poor man can ever hope to enjoy in time, or in eternity.

It is the power of God unto ſalvation, becauſe it reſcues us from every evil, either this world, or the next, abounds with.

Earth,

Earth, like a great field of blood, is filled with a multitude of victims, ſlaughtered at the ſeveral ſhrines of Pain, Diſeaſe, Wretchedneſs, anxious Care, Poverty, and Diſappointment.

Each man that treads the thorny path of life, ſoon feels the poignant anguiſh attendant upon mortality.

Climbing, with wearineſs, the up-hill road, all preſs, with eager ardour, to attain the ſummit. Some make great ſtrides, and quick advances; but, catching at ſomething too weak to bear their weight, headlong they tumble, and can riſe no more.

Others, more ſlow of foot, yet trudging on in the ſame unvaried pace, nor ever wandering from the common track, reach, at length, the longed-for eminence; but ſcarce can they look about them, ſcarce breathe the wholeſome air, before a pale, hideous ſpectre, beckons them away to the unknown world.

Many there are who cannot climb at all; who ſtruggle with the Fates, put forth all their ſtrength,

and

and yet have a perpetual ſomething, that, like a weight, drags them down to the private walk of life.

In ſhort, to drop the metaphor, miſery and misfortunes are the chief prerogatives of man.

The very mode of ſalutation we uſe in our daily meetings, ſufficiently implies the opinion we form of the weak condition of our nature. Other animals are pleaſed with an interview, nor ſeem in the leaſt conſcious of any approaching evil. Man is, by reflection, taught to expect nothing but diſaſter; and therefore never meets a fellow rational, without enquiring after his welfare or happineſs.

We continue longer in a ſtate of infancy, require the parent's aſſiſtance more; and are, when young, leſs able to provide for ourſelves than any other creature in the univerſe.

Our natural wants are alſo more numerous, our deſires more keen, and our imagination for ever employed in creating fanciful neceſſities.

Hence

Hence avarice ſteels the heart againſt compaſſion; pride robs the ſoul of mercy, and ſtern oppreſſion blaſts the efforts of honeſt induſtry.

Here you have the vain, the idle, and the luxurious, grow pale amidſt abundance; and though bleſſed with the means of ſolid happineſs, drawl out their days, and waſte their time, in the purſuit of every unſubſtantial non-entity this pitiful ſtate affords.

There you have an heart endowed with every noble, every ſocial quality, generous, humane, friendly, grateful, and obliging; yet quite broken or diſpirited by the repeated aſſaults of hard fortune; and, perhaps, deſtitute of even the moſt common comforts of life.

Here diſeaſe preſents a ſcene of horrid carnage. Thouſands there are who never experienced the bleſſings of pure or perfect health; who, literally, die daily, and yet are years before they reach the ſilent grave.

There are, you ſee, wretches whoſe bodies are both ſtrong, active, or robuſt; and yet the owners

feel

feel no joys, becauſe their minds are greatly out of tune: their envious nature pines in ſecret at another's exaltation; croſſed are their ambitious views, their towering projects fail them of ſucceſs, and their ſouls ſhudder at the moſt diſtant thought of controul, ſubjection, or dependence.

Such, in ſhort, is man's condition ſince the fall, that, to recount the many evils party-coloured life abounds with, would be to exhauſt the ſpirits, and tire the patience of even the moſt phlegmatic or mechanical. Suffice it conciſely to obſerve, that we ſeem ſo much in love with woe, that where Chriſt has been greatly bountiful, where he has kept from us real, we never fail to make imaginary griefs. So that miſery of ſome ſort is, in different portions, diſſeminated through all orders, ranks, or degrees of men.

The Goſpel of Jeſus only can therefore afford deliverance, ſalvation from, or proper ſupport under, the ſharp preſſures of affliction.

The common trite leſſons of advice, proceeding from extreme ignorance, are, in themſelves, idle, ridiculous, and abſurd. Such as, that a man ſhould

ſhould bear pain, becauſe it cannot be avoided: whereas his not being able to avoid it, is, in reality, the beſt reaſon in the world why he ſhould grieve. No man would lament a thing in his immediate power to remove.

Similar to this is the common chit-chat ſuggeſtion, that we all have ſomething to render us unhappy. An admirable conſideration, and truly of very great uſe to a man tortured by the excruciating agonies of the gout or ſtone.

When men better underſtood the Goſpel than at preſent; when they felt its bleſſings, and knew its intrinſic worth and excellence; ſuch fooliſh jargon never then paſſed current in the world. Weak, frail creatures, as we are, ſubject to a thouſand ills, and liable to perpetual blunders in points of the higheſt conſequence, great need have we, Heaven knows! for ſome viaticum, ſome cordial, to cheer our drooping ſpirits, and ſave us from deſpair.

The mind of every one muſt have ſome ſtay, ſome ſupport, whereon to lean, or it will ſink into a ſtate of gloomy ſullenneſs; and this the bleſſed

Goſpel

Goſpel alone affords. Here is true comfort for the afflicted; here a ſpiritual phyſician attends to heal all our woes, bind up our wounds, and pour the balmy bleſſings neceſſary, in this dreary ſtage, to ſuccour frail humanity.

A man who has taken his preſcriptions, learns to bear worldly poverty, becauſe in hourly expectation of being called to take poſſeſſion of that eternal ſtate he will aſſuredly enjoy, in right of his elder brother, Chriſt.

A father, huſband, or a friend, ſnatched from ſuch an one, at a time they were moſt uſeful, at a time too when the blow was moſt ſeverely felt, is yet quietly acquieſced in; not becauſe it cannot be avoided, but becauſe, as it is the Lord Jeſus only who gives, ſo he alone, according to every rule of right, has an undoubted privilege to take away, whenever it ſeemeth beſt to his godly wiſdom.

Sickneſs, or diſeaſe, is peaceably ſubmitted to, without a murmur, or repining thought; becauſe known to proceed from the hand of a kind friend, who will not ſuffer us to be afflicted above that we are able to bear, and never brings a miſery without a tenfold bleſſing at its heels.

When

When clay-cold death approaches; when the feeble pulſe forgets to play; when life, like a glimmering taper, is juſt ready to expire; then is the trying hour, when the Goſpel of Chriſt is indeed the power of God unto ſalvation: it cheers the gloomy ſoul; with a ray divine illumines all her powers; makes her ſurvive the cruel wreck of Nature; and, with an ardency never felt before, ſpring forth to meet her deareſt Lord in the glad regions of eternal day.

Theſe are ſome of the many comforts afforded by this divine ſyſtem of religion.

We muſt, 'tis true, be underſtood to point out what a man ought to be who expects the benefits of the Redeemer's death, not what we in general are.

Did truth, or the end for which we thus aſſemble, permit, gladly would we throw a veil over the too general practice of the world. But ſince what is right is beſt diſcerned by a view of its contrary; and ſince univerſal cenſure ought never to offend an individual, let us ſlightly pourtray, in order that we may more cautiouſly avoid ſuch errors as appear to infect the very maſs of human nature.

The

The Apoſtle declares himſelf not aſhamed to preach the goſpel of Chriſt to the moſt learned people in the world.

He, I ſuppoſe, did not doubt, but, as rational, thinking creatures, they would gladly receive a doctrine calculated to refine, exalt, and almoſt deify human nature.

What an horrid opinion would he have formed of our ſtupidity, had he been told that there would be a kingdom, the eſtabliſhed religion of which was Chriſtianity, and yet the people in general as great ſtrangers to the real nature of the Goſpel, as if bred in China or Japan; that the polite, or well-educated, would, in religious matters, be ignorant even to a proverb; that they might indeed moſt graciouſly condeſcend, once in the day, to viſit the houſe of God. But, leſt this ſhould be miſtaken for genuine piety, they would take eſpecial care to ſpend the remainder of the Sabbath in a manner as inconſiſtent with the honour of Chriſt as poſſible.

That the Bible would be treated with the greateſt contempt; that every unfledged coxcomb would

aſſume

assume the character of a wit; and, without knowing a letter of the language in which the Holy Scriptures were written, throw out shrewd hints, that it was beneath the dignity of a man of sense to believe.

That every man would commence a kind of pope, be the carver of his own religion, select such parts as best suited his palate, or his practice; reject the rest, and call this patched-up system Christianity.

That the very women would have the presumption to criticise upon the ways of the omnipotent God. That they should gravely tell you, "they cannot conceive; 'tis above their capacity; but they are inclined to think it cannot be so, and therefore must be otherways."

And, lastly, that the vulgar of this nation should the nearest approach to mere brutes, of any people under the sun; that they should be more impious, more abandoned, and, if possible, more ignorant, though less culpable for that ignorance than their betters. To crown the whole: that these people, with such blessed qualifications, would

would yet, with great compoſure, call each other a Chriſtian.

Suppoſe St. Paul had been preſented with the tranſcript of ſuch an account, what think you would be the moſt gentle ſentence he might pronounce againſt us? Why, that ſuch a nation, deſerted by Chriſt in judgment for its crimes, was, like other ancient kingdoms, haſtening apace to ruin and deſtruction.

A time there was when the reverſe was true, when both prince and people thought the Goſpel of Chriſt the only thing they had to be proud of; when, in conſequence of this opinion, the croſs was diſplayed upon their banners, and round them inſcribed the following motto, "By this only can we hope to conquer."

Then, in all poſts of profit, truſt, or honour, the beſt recommendation a man could have, was being the moſt ſincere Chriſtian. 'Twas no ſtrange ſight to ſee the emperor, and all his courtiers, proſtrate upon the ground, in humble ſupplication to their Saviour for a bleſſing upon the public counſels. So far from being aſhamed of the

Gospel of Christ, he only had cause to blush who was not a sincere lover of Jesus: such a person was publicly whooped at, studiously shunned, and as cautiously avoided. They acted like men; first examined the proofs urged in favour of the Bible; and, convinced of its divine Original, eagerly embraced, and endeavoured properly to understand it.

These are the worthy examples we should follow, not permitting ourselves to be led astray in principle, or in practice, by a set of empty-headed butterflies; but always remembering, that men of the greatest abilities, and such as have done everlasting honour to human nature, have in general been the most pious, most humble, and the sincerest Christians.

The very term implies a reliance upon the Lord Jesus only for eternal happiness. Man is a creature purchased and redeemed from destruction by the precious blood of God cloathed in human flesh.

The writings of the Old Testament are only designed to point out what Christ, when upon earth, should do and suffer for our sakes. The

Scriptures

Scriptures of the New are, if I may ſo ſpeak, a ſupplement, an appendix, containing an hiſtoric account, that the Perſon foretold actually came, and literally fulfilled all the various things predicted of him; that he purchaſed for every one a right to eternal glory.

Man, as a fallen creature, can do nothing to ſave himſelf; he can only accept the benefits of ſalvation, ſincerely love the Benefactor, and be cautious not to offend ſo good, ſo gracious a Redeemer.

To be accounted the friend of God, to be admitted to a familiar intercourſe with the Deity, to live for ever in his preſence, to ſurvey the wonders of his love, and be loſt in rapture at the tranſcendent myſtery of redemption by blood divine; this is the grand perfection of our nature, this the glorious privilege to which every pious Chriſtian is aſſuredly entitled; only let us not be wanting in gratitude for ſuch mighty favours.

To purchaſe theſe weighty bleſſings, many a ſharp pang our dear Emanuel felt, many a ſigh heaved from his labouring breaſt, many a briny

tear ſtole ſoftly down his heavenly face, many a midnight hour he ſpent in ſilent ſupplication to the Father for our welfare. When feeble Nature called for ſome repoſe, he ſtretched his wearied limbs upon a bed of earth, not having a more convenient reſting-place; then riſing with the grey-ey'd morn, the day he paſſed in ſeeking proper objects to whom he might communicate ſome good.

Formed with all the tender feelings of a man, much did he ſuffer from the preſſing wants of life; many a day did Nature call in vain for nouriſhment, unleſs, perchance, invited by one more compaſſionate than the reſt to partake of a decent, homely meal.

Such was the miſery the Lord of Glory underwent. He was indeed what Iſaiah declared he ſhould be, a man of ſorrows, and ſcarcely acquainted with any thing but grief.

And, when the hour approached that he ſhould be offered, when the Sacrifice was ſuſpended in air; then—but 'twas a diſmal ſcene that beggars all deſcription. Suffice it to ſay, Nature ſhud-

dered

dered at the ſight, and Darkneſs drew her ſable curtain over the world.

And now, my brethren, think we it right to be aſhamed of ſuch a friend? Doubtleſs, our hearts recoil at ſo monſtrous a thought. No, ſays honeſt Nature, rather let want, infamy, and every ſpecies of diſtreſs, befal me; rather let me be a vagabond upon the earth, ſooner than that I ſhould bluſh to own, worſhip, or adore the divine Author of my redemption; becauſe, at my greateſt need, he only can aſſiſt me; and I know his religion to be the power of God unto ſalvation to every one, without exception, that truly believeth.

Therefore, Hallelujah! worthy is the Lamb, that was ſlain, to receive power, riches, wiſdom, ſtrength, honour, glory, and bleſſing. Amen and Amen.

Be it, therefore, rather my chief employment, to ſing, with the ſaints above, Hallelujah! worthy is the Lamb, that was ſlain, to receive power, riches, wiſdom, ſtrength, glory, and bleſſing. Amen and Amen.

SER-

dered at the light, and Darkness drew her sable curtain over the world.

And now, my brethren, think we it right to be ashamed of such a friend? Doubtless, our hearts recoil at so monstrous a thought. No, let us honest Nature, rather let wan, infamy, and every species of misery, befal me;- rather let me be a vagabond upon the earth, sooner than that I should blush to own, worship, or adore the divine Author of my redemption; because, at my greatest need, he only can assist me; and I know his religion to be the power of God unto salvation to every one, without exception, that truly believeth.

Therefore, Hallelujah! worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory, and blessing. Amen and Amen.

Be it, therefore, rather my chief employment, to sing with the saints above, Hallelujah! worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, glory, and blessing. Amen and Amen.

S. E. K.

SERMON IX.

An inordinate paſſion for riches, or ſenſual pleaſures, ſhewn to be incompatible with Chriſtianity, and the happineſs of man.

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SERMON IX.

First Epiſtle General of St. John, Chap. ii. Verſ. 15, 16, 17.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world, the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world; and the world paſſeth away, and the luſt thereof; but he that doeth the will of God, abideth for ever.

THE writer of the epiſtle before us was that beloved diſciple for whom our Lord always expreſſed a more than ordinary affection and tenderneſs.

He is, throughout the Goſpel, ſaid to be that diſciple whom Jeſus loved. As he lived many years

years after the death of Chriſt, even until the final deſtruction of Jeruſalem by the Romans, ſo had he frequent opportunities, by his perſonal authority, to ſuppreſs the many dangerous errors which commenced about this time.

His Goſpel was compoſed to confirm the authority of the other Evangeliſts; to relate ſeveral paſſages or incidents in our bleſſed Lord's life, which they had omitted; and to confute the idle notion of ſome heretics, who openly denied that Chriſt had any exiſtence before his birth into this world.

This his Epiſtle is called a general one, becauſe not addreſſed to any particular nation or people, but deſigned for the univerſal benefit of all believers in Chriſt.

It is in your Bibles called the firſt Epiſtle General of St. John, which ſuppoſes the two following ſhort letters; the one addreſſed to a noble Lady, the other to a private friend, called Gaius, both written by the ſame Apoſtle. But it may be juſt neceſſary to obſerve, that learned men in general do not think this to be the caſe: they rather imagine the two other Epiſtles penned by a different perſon

ſon from the Apoſtle; and they alledge one John, a preſbyter or elder in the Chriſtian church, to have been the author.

However this be, there is no manner of doubt but that the epiſtle, from whence the text is taken, was certainly written by that very John, the author of the Goſpel, and who was the peculiar favourite of Chriſt †.

He begins this letter, by declaring the intimate familiarity he and his brother Apoſtles had had with the Author of life eternal; tells them the reaſon of his writing is to prevent them from ſinning; but that ſhould they, through the ſuddenneſs

† That St. John, who wrote the Goſpel, was alſo the author of this Epiſtle, is proved by the teſtimonies of Origen, Euſebius, Æcumenius, and others. Indeed Dr. Mill, in the Prolegomena to his Greek Teſtament, poſitively aſſerts, that this Evangeliſt alſo wrote the two following Epiſtles to Gaius and a noble lady: his words are, "Epiſtolas autem iſtas habere auctorem Joannem Apoſtolum, eundem illum dico, qui Evangelium et priorem Epiſtolam Catholicam conſcripſit, ex eo plane conſtat, quod in iſtis omnibus eadem paſſim ſint νοήματα, idem genus et character dictionis.

Vid. Græc. Teſt. Millii.

neſs of ſurprize, or ſtrength of temptation, be led to commit a fault, they have an advocate, a perſon to plead with the Father in their behalf; that this perſon is Jeſus Chriſt, the Righteous Saviour.

He lays down a ſhort rule, whereby they may be certain whether they truly know him, even by keeping his commandments. And, after different inſtructions, he earneſtly requeſts them not to love either the world itſelf, or the things that are in the world.

And the reaſon he gives for this general prohibition is, becauſe all, not ſome, but all that is in the world, whether it be the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, or even the pride of life, is not of the Father, proceedeth not from God, but from the world; and the world, together with all things therein, paſſeth away, vaniſheth, will ſoon be no more. But he that doeth the will of God, he that humbly endeavours to obey Chriſt's commands; he only, when all ſublunary things decay, he only ſhall abide, ſhall live, flouriſh, and be happy, for ever.

By

By the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life, St. John means to expreſs ſenſual pleaſures, riches, and worldly honour.

That our Lord governs the affairs of kings and kingdoms, is moſt certain; that he diſtributes even temporal bleſſings to every one ſeverally as he will, is no leſs infallibly true. But time, when compared to eternity, being as a moment compared to an age, this life, weighed in a proper balance, muſt ever be found wanting.

The world, then, not being man's final home, thoſe things, and thoſe only, which contribute to further or promote the ſoul's ſalvation, truly and properly deſerve the name of bleſſings.

Senſual pleaſures, riches, or worldly honour, ſo far from being inſtrumental to our happineſs, ſo far from inciting in us a love for the Redeemer, generally give a wrong bias to the mind, generally ſeparate it from the fountain of all ſolid comfort, cheriſh the pride and arrogance that ſticks ſo cloſe to our polluted nature. On all which accounts, ſuch things cannot proceed from the Father, but from the world, which is full of corruption, and in continual enmity and variance with Chriſt.

Whoever,

Whoever, therefore, loves ſuch a world, the love of the Father is certainly not in him.

Since, then, theſe three capital articles, which ſo wholly engroſs our attention, are of this wicked world; ſince we have the authority of God himſelf, by the mouth of his Apoſtle, that they proceed not from him; here is for a Chriſtian ample and ſufficient reaſon why he ſhould neither love, aſpire after, nor eagerly endeavour to enjoy, either ſenſual pleaſures, riches, or worldly honour.

But, was this even not the caſe; were they not ſo extremely detrimental to true Chriſtian piety, there is yet in their nature ſomething ſo unſubſtantial, ſo unſatisfactory, and ſo precarious, that nothing leſs than the devil's infatuation could poſſibly lead us to delight in them.

As to the pleaſures of ſenſe, when we have revelled to the full, when we have tortured Reaſon for an ingenious device to act the brute with a better grace; when we have ranſacked ſea and air, and ranged through the boundleſs regions of licentious appetite; each wild inhabitant of the woods, each beaſt, each reptile, each deſpicable

inſect,

inſect, diſputes, with juſtice, its ſuperiority in this reſpect. Their deſires are much keener, enjoyment much longer, and happineſs uninterrupted by reflection.

Whilſt, poor man, during the intervals of paſſion, when the ſatiated appetite calls for a reſpite, he alone is tortured, alone is harraſſed, and his felicity is broken in upon by the agonizing dread of future evils.

When wantonly carouſing with his friends; when noiſy Riot ſhuts the door to Senſe and Seriouſneſs; when Paſſion, like a furious charioteer, treads under foot the laws of Chriſt, Man, unhappy man alone, ſees, like the eaſtern prince Belſhazzar, at midnight, a hand writing upon the wall, in large capitals, "Thou poor, frail, idle, fluttering, wretched creature, ſoon ſhall thy joys expire like a taper! ſoon ſhall a ghaſtly ſmile overſpread thy countenance! ſoon ſhalt thou grin horribly! 'Tis the command of that Jeſus, whom thou haſt long, long forgotten, that thou inſtantly prepare for judgment; for even this night ſhall thy ſoul be required of thee."

As

As to riches, it is the moſt fantaſtic illuſion, the moſt enthuſiaſtic madneſs, to ſuppoſe that they have any intrinſic worth or excellence. Man, as a compound of body as well as ſoul, has occaſion in this life for many things: the demands of nature once ſatisfied, a few comfortable conveniencies provided, the reſt is all imaginary, founded in a fanciful pre-eminence, the offspring of pride or conceit, and the ſtrong indication of a weak head, and an heart totally eſtranged from God the Saviour.

Such ſubſiſtence as is neceſſary for our well-being in this world, and conſiſtent with our eternal ſalvation, the Divine Redeemer will never ſuffer us long to want. A bleſſing upon our honeſt endeavours a Chriſtian has, of all men, the greateſt right to expect; and he that wiſhes for more is a fool, knowing nothing; or he who hopes for more may call himſelf, but if there is truth in Chriſt, can never be deemed a true believer.

A man, therefore, bred in the ſchool of Jeſus, too well knows the nature of worldly affairs to be delighted with any thing ſuch a land of outſides

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can afford. Riches in particular, after anſwering the demands of nature, he is convinced are wholly uſeleſs.

Experience corroborates the teſtimony of the Word of God; thoſe who wallow in wealth being ſo far from the moſt happy, that they are too frequently the moſt miſerable of all mankind.

Vanity ſupplies the place of Senſe and Reaſon; Affectation is introduced in the place of honeſt-hearted Sincerity; prompt Truth is ſacrificed to Politeneſs; too conceited to be convinced of their own wretchedneſs; too proud to rely upon the merits of another for ſalvation; too idle to be well employed; and too well bred to be ſincerely religious. Poſſeſſed of ſo many deſtructive qualities, it is no wonder the opulent diſſipate their lives in thoughtleſs gaiety, and grow grey in trifling.

Their variegated life clearly demonſtrates their reſtleſſneſs within: they are ſo many beacons, hung out by the kind hand of Providence for the benefit of their fellow-voyagers, as a caution not to ſplit upon the dangerous rock of worldly riches.

Great treaſure, therefore, being of itſelf incapable to confer happineſs, is on this account not of the Father; for which reaſon, if any man is deeply ſmitten with its charms, whoever he be that is captivated with the love of riches, called by St. John the luſt of the eyes, we may ſafely conclude the love of the Father is not in him.

Ambition indeed wears a better face; there is ſomething manly in the thought; ten thouſand things may be pleaded in its behalf. To be diſtinguiſhed from the common herd by ſome outward badge of honour, is very ſoothing to the pride of our corrupted nature; but on this very account is it the more dangerous, as it adds fuel to the fire; encreaſes, inſtead of diminiſhing, that ſelf-ſufficiency which is too much the characteriſtic of our ſpecies.

The very firſt principle of ſaving Chriſtianity, the firſt ſtep towards juſtification, is humility, a deep heart-felt ſenſe of our own worthleſſneſs, and the Redeemer's all-ſufficient merits: but when the little heart is tickled with a ſtraw; when it is dilated by any outward mark of diſtinction; when it ſaunts and flutters in its own importance; 'tis

then

then manifeſt the love of ſomething elſe beſides Chriſt has taken ſtrong poſſeſſion of the whole man.

Beſides, ſuch is the nature of public applauſe, that it is almoſt as difficult to keep as to obtain; an involuntary error ſhall render the man, before the object of public admiration, in an inſtant the mark of univerſal ridicule, odium and contempt. The vulgar are ever charmed with novelty; and he who courts the applauſe of the multitude, muſt prepare for the invidious reproach of envious ill-nature: he muſt expect to have each blemiſh enlarged upon, each fault made public, and each crime exaggerated by the kind, buſy hand of Cenſure. In ſhort, every ſpecies of worldly honour or diſtinction is a dangerous pre-eminence, on no account to be courted or ſought after by a ſincere Chriſtian, but rather to be dreaded as a too powerful temptation to ſin.

Granting, however, what is by no means the caſe, that ſenſual pleaſure was truly deſirable, riches a ſubſtantial bleſſing, and worldly honour capable of conferring heart-felt ſatisfaction; ſtill are we ſure and certain that the world, together

with its luſt, will ſoon paſs away, vaniſh, no trace of its former exiſtence will be to be found.

The Word of God divides it into three periods of time; the firſt, before the law was delivered at Mount Sinai, conſiſting of two thouſand years; the ſecond, from the promulgation of the law until the coming of Chriſt the Meſſiah, conſiſting alſo of two thouſand years; and the third, from the birth of Chriſt to the final judgment.

Hence this period is, by the Apoſtles, conſtantly called *the laſt time*, in a multitude of paſſages too long to recite; and there has been a moſt antient tradition, handed down from near the time of Moſes, that the world ſhould laſt only ſix thouſand years; two before the law, two under the law, and two under the Goſpel: agreeable to which time, the world was actually two thouſand years old when the law was given; and our Lord as actually came, according to the moſt exact chronology, about the four thouſandth and fourth year of the world.

So that, ſhould this tradition be true, which I neither affirm nor deny; but, ſhould it be true,

nature

nature itſelf is almoſt ready to breathe her laſt; the ſun grows aged, and the celeſtial lamps will ſoon, very ſoon be quite extinguiſhed.

Notwithſtanding all that has been advanced; notwithſtanding all that can be urged upon the ſubject; ſuch is the condition of our nature, ſuch the corruption we bring into the world, ſuch the ſad degeneracy of fallen man, that, as our church expreſſes it, we cannot of ourſelves repent, turn unto God, or do a ſingle religious action without the aſſiſtance of the Spirit of Chriſt.

It is beyond the reach of language to give a man, born blind, any idea of light or colours; and we all come into this ſtate with our underſtanding ſo darkened, our will ſo corrupt, and our affections ſo impure, that all the human arguments in the creation, unleſs backed by the Divine Spirit of Grace, will fail of the wiſhed-for ſucceſs.

The ſole end of exhortation is to perſuade; the flowers of rhetoric may dazzle the imagination, pleaſe the fancy, or affect the paſſions; but it muſt be ſomething more than human that can ever reach the heart. He only that created it can

ſoften,

ſoften, mollify, or melt it down like wax, to receive the impreſſion of the Divine Image. Without this, we may preach, and you may hear, till Doomſday, and neither preacher nor hearer be one tittle the better Chriſtian.

Every trial we make ſhews us the mean nature of ſenſual pleaſures; and yet, the firſt gewgaw held out to view inſpires us with freſh ardour, and we join in the chaſe with redoubled vigour.

Common ſenſe teaches us the periſhable nature of riches; and yet, as if there was no Saviour, no Providence, to over-rule or confound our paltry ſchemes, we are ever buſy in weaving a fine-ſpun web, in laying a ſubtle plan to be rich; and then ſtand amazed if it don't ſucceed, call it a great misfortune, and wonder at the ill-treatment we meet with in the world; whereas the error lies in not having ſufficient faith in our dear Maſter, in not caſting all our care upon him, though we have his aſſurance that he careth for us.

He, therefore, my brethren, who attempts to carve for himſelf his ſituation in this world, however ſubtle his plans, however deep or well laid

his

his ſchemes, by not humbly ſubmitting to the Providence of Jeſus Chriſt, by ſetting up himſelf, and affecting to be independent, he treaſures up, in this world, anguiſh of heart, pain, and diſappointment.

Since, therefore, my fellow Chriſtians, all that we can ſay availeth nothing, let us be taught by the Spirit of Chriſt.

There is a ſomething in age, eſpecially when accompanied with wiſdom, piety, or experience, that affects even the moſt abandoned.

An aged, venerable Apoſtle, filled with the Holy Ghoſt, writes a letter to you, my friends. Among other directions for the good of your ſouls, he begs you to hold the world, and all its glittering mummery, in contempt. His hoary head, ſilver locks, and deep furrowed brow, beſpeak a reverential awe. He was near an hundred years old when he wrote this Epiſtle; had, as you may ſuppoſe, ſeen much of the world, much of its follies, much of its wickedneſs; ſo that it cannot be urged he wanted experience: and as he had

had perſonally converſed with Jeſus Chriſt, his judgment was uncorrupt.

Believe, therefore, in time, what he ſays. When he aſſures you that every thing in this world is not of the Father, proceeds not from God; and as the world itſelf ſo ſoon paſſeth away, haſten, for pity's ſake, to do the will of God, that you may ſurvive the ruins of creation, and abide for ever.

We ſpeak not, fellow Chriſtians, as one ignorant of human nature. We all, in times paſt, have had our converſation in the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life; but Chriſt, who is rich in mercy, takes every opportunity to open our eyes, and penetrate our hearts with a ſenſe of his divine love, in dying for us criminals. This ſhould redouble our diligence for the ſmall remainder of our time. Of ourſelves we can do nothing. Chriſt became incarnate, and ſuffered upon the croſs, becauſe of this inability. Hence a proſtration of ſoul before the throne of Grace, acknowledging our weakneſs, and requeſting the powerful aid of Jeſus, will be ſurely attended with ſucceſs. Let a man try the

experiment

experiment with ſincerity, and I will ſtake my ſalvation, that the event will prove favourable; he will ſoon be able to do wonders through Chriſt, who will ſtrengthen him.

Talk as we pleaſe, this, and this only, is the true ſpirit of the Goſpel. To harangue upon man's righteouſneſs, good works, or repentance, is to chatter nonſenſe by wholeſale. Even the Mahometans are far from dreaming about ſaving themſelves; they leave that taſk to their pretended prophet: ſuch a notion is the laſt effort the devil can make in oppoſition to the truth. The world alſo will join in the oppoſition, becauſe the world, in general, is extremely ignorant, and extremely proud.

Man can do nothing of any efficacy to promote his ſalvation; it is Chriſt only that gives him power to will and to do of his good pleaſure.

The common trite objection is, What becomes of morality? What! why much ſafer upon this foundation than any other. View but the perſons who talk ſo much about virtue; do they moſt deſpiſe the world? No; they are moſt in love

with

with it. Are they the moſt pious? Far from it; Chriſt is entirely left out of their honeſt ſcheme. In ſhort, as St. John ſays, This only is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith in the Divine Saviour, and reliance upon his blood for redemption. This is the belief that leads a man to do the will of God with thankfulneſs; this only enrolls our names among a catalogue of heroes recounted by St. Paul, of whom the world was not worthy; and this will ſafely conduct us to the land of bliſs and glory.

Let us, therefore, my brethren, conclude the ſervice of our preſent meeting by an unanimous ſupplication to the Almighty for his future favour and protection.

O thou moſt aſtoniſhing Being, whom the poverty of human language faileth to deſcribe with propriety; tremendous God! Or, to addreſs thee by a more endearing name, ſince to thee we ſtand indebted for exiſtence, Father, liſten, we beſeech thee, to our fervent prayers; and, as thou art poſſeſſed of goodneſs infinite, treat us with pity, tenderneſs, and compaſſion. Since thou haſt power almighty, exert it to preſerve us feeble

creatures

creatures from every harm. Since thou art the fountain of true wiſdom, give to us a portion of that underſtanding which will inſtruct us to pant after celeſtial happineſs. Be pleaſed to rectify whatever, in our thoughts or actions, thou ſeeſt amiſs; and let the Saviour's ſufferings atone for all our vile miſdeeds. Wean us from thoſe luſts which may contaminate our ſouls, and thus render them obnoxious to thine heavy diſpleaſure; and enable us, in every occurrence of life, ſo to act, and to paſs through things temporal in ſuch a manner, as that we may not loſe the things which are eternal. Grant this, heavenly Father, for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake. Amen.

SER-

creatures from every harm. Since thou art the fountain of true wisdom, give to us a portion of that understanding which will instruct us to pass after celestial happiness. He pleased to rectify whatever, in our thoughts or actions, thou findest sinful, and let the Saviour's sufferings atone for all our vile wickedness. Wean us from those lusts which may contaminate our souls, and this render them obnoxious to thine heavy displeasure; and enable us, in every occurrence of life, to do, and to pass through things temporal in such a manner, as that we may not lose the things which are eternal. Grant this, heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

SERMON X.

God our support under all worldly tribulation, and the Author of our internal peace.

SERMON X.

St. John, Chap. xvi. Ver. 33.

These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

OUR blessed Lord, just before he celebrated the last Passover, being at supper with his disciples, takes occasion, among other things, to inculcate the necessity, and set them a pattern of the greatest and most surprising humility.

Supper, says the holy writer, being ended, he riseth from table, threw aside his garments, poured water into a bason, took a towel, and, behold a scene of wonder and amazement! the great God of Nature, the sublime Creator, washes even the very feet of his sinful creatures!

This

This tranſaction being finiſhed, with great grief of heart, and a troubled ſpirit, he points out the wretch whoſe perfidious ſoul led him to betray the world's greateſt benefactor.

During the interval, we may ſuppoſe Judas to have been ſettling with the prieſts the helliſh plan of operation. Jeſus took occaſion to deliver the words contained in the 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th chapters of this Goſpel; words that, all circumſtances conſidered, are perhaps the moſt tender, ſoft, feeling, and affectionate, that ever dropped from the heavenly lips of Truth. In them we ſee diſplayed a ſoul filled with a philanthropic love; an heart, a humane heart, warmed with the fineſt emotions, touched with the moſt exquiſite ſenſibility, and melted in pity to the frailty and forlorn condition of our helpleſs nature. The whole ſcene demands the finiſhed pencil of the greateſt genius, and would make a truly grand, ſublime, and inſtructive piece.

You are to conſider a ſet of honeſt-hearted men, who, ſtruck with amazement at the miracles Jeſus wrought, enraptured with his doctrine, and captivated by his condeſcenſion, had left their

their little all, deſerted both friends and kindred to follow him.

Hitherto they had ſhared in common the fortune of their Maſter, had partook of every entertainment made by the benevolence of the charitable; enjoyed the company of an inſtructor capable to adviſe them upon any emergency, ready to ſettle their little diſagreements, and willing, if poſſible, to have them live in friendſhip, harmony, and peace.

Their eyes being not yet opened, that they might underſtand the ancient Scriptures, or writings of the prophets; you are to imagine their heads dreaming of nothing but temporal grandeur. Hence every ſyllable our Lord let fall concerning his kingdom, they conſtantly explained in their own ſenſe, agreeable to the erroneous notions they had formed concerning theſe ſubjects.

We are not, therefore, to wonder, that when Chriſt, in expreſs words, declares his kingdom not to be of this world, they begin to be very ſorrowful: nor is it ſurpriſing to find them ſtruck with amazement when he talks about leaving the world, or dying an ignominious death.

In this ſituation of mind you are to ſuppoſe them when they find themſelves about to loſe their deareſt Maſter. Inſtead of a familiar and friendly converſation, they are now only requeſted to believe in him: inſtead of being cheered by his ſacred preſence, and enlivened by his counſel, they are to wait for the inſtruction of one whom he promiſes to ſend; their attention is rouzed, amazement ſits painted on each cheek, a ſilent grief fills each countenance with diſtreſs.

And is ſuch (are they ready to ſay) is ſuch the end of all our labour? Is it for this we have wandered through the world, for this we have left ourſelves without either home or habitation; for this we have felt the griping hand of Want, and known but every ill? Poor as we are, muſt we become poorer ſtill; muſt we be completely wretched; muſt we be quite, quite helpleſs, hopeleſs, deſtitute and forlorn, ſubject to every inſulting tongue, liable to every contemptuous ſneer? All this we have chearfully ſubmitted to, without even a murmur, whilſt thou waſt with us, and our guide; and now our laſt, our only remaining comfort, is juſt ready to be ſnatched from us; we are, it ſeems, to be ſeparated from, and deprived

of

of even thee. Whatever agonies thou art to ſuffer, whatever death thou art to die; ſooner than this ſhould be the caſe, ſooner than leave us in the world, permit, we beſeech thee, permit us to die, and ſuffer with thee.

To chaſe away the gloomy grief that thus overwhelmed their ſouls; to ſhew them the abſolute neceſſity there was for his death; to ſupport their drooping ſpirits under the pangs of ſeparation, and to convince them of his further affection and regard, he declares, he means not to leave them comfortleſs; that he only goes to prepare a proper place for them; that he will ſend one who ſhall teach them all things. He calls them his friends, aſſures them he lays down his very life for their ſakes; that in ſo acting, he does more than moſt men, and all that any man can do for a friend. He, therefore, moſt earneſtly entreats them, if they pretend to any love, any regard, or any affection for him, that they will ſhew it, by keeping punctually his commandments.

He endeavours to prepare them againſt the evils ſoon to happen, by declaring, that the hour approaches when they ſhall be ſcattered abroad,

abroad, and he left alone. Theſe things, however, ſaith he, have I ſpoken unto you, not to plunge you into greater grief, not that you ſhould be more ſorrowful, but that in me ye might have comfort and peace. In the world, as I have already obſerved to you, ye ſhall have much, much tribulation; but be not, on this account, utterly caſt down; be of good cheer, be joyful, I have overcome, entirely conquered the world.

The great neceſſity for this conſolation will appear, if we but ſlightly conſider the difficulties, hardſhips, diſcouragements, nay, miſeries, the Apoſtles were, in a little time, to ſtruggle with, and ſurmount.

The Scribes and Phariſees having loſt the knowledge of the Old Teſtament; having, either through ignorance, deſign, or a mixture of both, perverted their true ſenſe, treated Jeſus as an arrant impoſtor, as a mover and promoter of ſedition; his miraculous works they aſcribed to a diabolic power; his beneficent, humane acts, to a deſigning cunning.

In

In conſequence of this injurious opinion, they prevailed on Pilate, the Roman governor, to ſentence our Lord to be crucified.

His followers, being moſtly poor, illiterate, uneducated men, they treated with the higheſt contempt; looked upon them as a ſet of deluded, preſuming enthuſiaſts; and, without mercy, devoted them to deſtruction.

To aſſert, after their Maſter's death, that this Jeſus, whom the prieſts cauſed to be killed, was actually riſen from the dead; that he was the very perſon Moſes, and all the ancient prophets, foretold ſhould die for the ſins of the world; obſtinately to perſiſt in ſuch aſſertions, publicly to vindicate their truth, and this in direct oppoſition to the opinions of the great, the learned, the wiſe, and the eloquent; ſuch a conduct muſt neceſſarily expoſe them to the greateſt hatred, and involve them in a variety of the moſt dreadful calamities. Want, infamy, and every ſpecies of bodily diſtreſs, were nothing to the perſecutions they were to ſuffer from the malice of their implacable enemies.

The

The power alſo of the fallen and accurſed ſpirits, ever ready to thwart any deſigns to further man's happineſs, was reſolutely ſet to overturn and deſtroy them.

From Scripture it appears that theſe beings have ſinned beyond redemption; that men were created to ſupply their place, and enjoy hereafter the ſame degree of happineſs from which they fell. Hence are they at war and enmity with our race; and hence, we being free agents, they are permitted to uſe their endeavours to tempt and ſeduce us from our duty, Chriſt always taking eſpecial care to do as much, or more, to promote our happineſs, than they can poſſibly do to render us miſerable.

Upon diſcovering, therefore, the method contrived to accompliſh our ſalvation, it was but natural they ſhould exert every art, try every expedient to harraſs and make unhappy the perſons employed in this glorious undertaking. On which account, one cannot wonder, that in the world they met with ſcarcely any thing but tribulation.

Under

Under theſe circumſtances, under the heavy preſſure of ſuch difficulties, where were they to apply for help, comfort, and ſupport? where, but to the Author of all peace on earth, and happineſs in heaven; where, but to the divine Saviour, the fountain of harmony and good-will.

Accordingly, when the Comforter actually came, when the divine Spirit was infuſed into their ſouls, he not only enlarged their capacities, and enlightened their underſtandings; he not only taught them the true intent and meaning of the ſacred Scriptures, but he gave them, however outwardly oppreſſed, inward joy, peace and conſolation, in Chriſt Jeſus.

Since, therefore, all Scripture is written for the benefit of after-times; ſince it is handed down for our uſe and inſtruction; ſince we profeſs to believe in the ſame Saviour; ſince the world is, in all ages, pretty ſimilar; ſince the ſtrength or malice of our ſpiritual enemies is not abated, or at all diminiſhed by time; ſince we are all a ſad, ſad mixture of ſin, folly, error, and impiety. From the conſtruction of things, the frame of nature, our different lots in life, the nicety and tender

make

make of the human body, the caprice, artifice, or deſign of many, and the oppoſite or contrary views of all men; from theſe, and other principles I at preſent omit, 'tis manifeſt, and certainly true, that in the world we alſo muſt, nor can reaſonably expect to meet with any thing but much, much tribulation.

'Tis no leſs an infallible certainty, that however we torture expedients, try experiments, or put our invention upon the rack, yet in God only can we ever meet with true, permanent, and ſatisfactory peace.

Take but a tranſient glimpſe of the ways of men; view but with a vulgar eye the glaring ills of life, you will be convinced that Miſery, with a laviſh hand, has ſcattered upon ſome her black, mournful favours.

Be not deceived by external drapery; widen your obſervation, enlarge your proſpect, undraw the curtain that veils or conceals the heart, and you will be ſtill more convinced that all are, in ſome meaſure, involved, or partake of this group of evils.

Here

Here meagre Poverty aſſaults or blaſts the powers of honeſt, well-meaning Induſtry. There pale, emaciated, naked Want, with nerves unſtrung, livid looks, and ghaſtly countenance, ſtalks forth to make the wretched feel a greater weight of woe.

On this ſide you behold Juſtice trod under foot by Oppreſſion, Friendſhip impoſed upon by Cunning, Falſhood puts on the borrowed maſk of Truth, Villainy wears the garb of Court-politeneſs, and Mercy, with all the engaging eloquence of ſoftneſs, cries in vain to Cruelty for pity or compaſſion.

Here view Diſeaſe, armed with his horrid inſtruments of torture, attended by a legion of hideous ſpectres. Obſerve, the ſtrong, the ſprightly, the healthy and the robuſt, ſoon become victims, ſlaughtered by this gloomy tyrant. Whereever we turn, ſcenes, black ſcenes of woe, ſurround us. Calamity is the common lot of all; it dwells on the high pavilion of exalted greatneſs, nor ever fails to pay a rueful viſit to the humble cottager.

Beſides the common courſe of evils; beſides the general diſaſters we all expect to meet with; the headſtrong paſſions, unruly appetites, or irregular deſires, in a greater or leſs degree, ſeizes upon each man's vitals; gnaws, like a vulture, his very heart, and are a ſource of endleſs vexation, anguiſh and diſappointment.

Such is a ſhort, but melancholy, map of human life. A few, very few exceptions, perhaps, there may be; but ſo exceeding ſmall the number, that we may venture to aſſert it bears no manner of proportion.

Such therefore is the world filled with; either outward miſery, or inward anguiſh; and to eſcape without a ſhare in the tribulation, to breathe a peſtilential air, and not be diſeaſed, would be a vain expectation, and ſuch an improbability as common ſenſe will not permit us to expect.

Some balmy bleſſings then nature ſtands in need of: ſome peace, ſome ſolid peace to ſuccour the frailty of our ſpecies.

For

For this, the gay, the giddy and unthinking, call for the lute, the viol, or the dance; fly to the ſcenes of noiſy diſſipation; throng in crouds to public diverſions; and, like children with their rattles, thus lull aſleep the nobleſt faculties of the ſoul.

For this, the vain adjuſt each nicety of dreſs, and run about in queſt of admiration.

For this, the grave plan ſubtle ſchemes; the learned deal out their pompous ignorance; the ambitious climb the craggy road to power: and in ſhort, for this, all mankind, whatever their rank or ſtation, purſue ſome favourite track, tread ſome beaten path, and graſp at heart-felt peace.

The bountiful Redeemer has given to us all this anxious reſtleſſneſs within; happineſs we are kindly taught to pant after, but perpetually blunder, and miſtake the way to obtain it.

Chriſt has ſolemnly declared, that in him alone we can have peace. We generally reverſe the ſentence, truſt not in his declaration, but ſeek for this peace in every thing but him. Hence all our

acqui-

acquiſitions, all our joys, all our noiſy mirth, like a powerful opiate, deadens for a while our turbulent ſenſes, but are far from filling that aching void each man, would he be honeſt to himſelf, finds in his own boſom.

Beſides, our Lord's aſſertion is founded upon reaſon, and the nature of things.

Our body and ſoul are two diſtinct, ſeperate, different beings: the former is made of earth, and is therefore ſupported by the air and earthly food: the latter is a ſpirit, and receives what is neceſſary to preſerve its faculties in perfection; not from matter, not from any thing in this world, but immediately from God, who is the ſupreme head and Father of all Spirits.

There is no manner of doubt but that, even in this world, there is ſome kind of communication between the great God and our ſoul, although we are ignorant of the way or manner.

When therefore the mind is intent upon the affairs of this life; when it places not its chief de-

dependence upon Chriſt; when it is ſolely engaged in buſineſs, pleaſure or amuſement, it naturally becomes reſtleſs, uneaſy or miſerable, as it is not employed about thoſe things for which God created it. Hence it may be called dead, as it receives no ſupport, no life, no vigor from Chriſt Jeſus.

This being the caſe, we are called, ſolicited, entreated and requeſted to change our conduct, to be alive unto God, and dead to the world: to work in us this change, is the ſole buſineſs of our religion.

Knowing the weakneſs of our nature; knowing the miſery to which we are ſubject; pitying our ſituation, and commiſerating our misfortunes, the bleſſed Saviour left us a legacy of heavenly peace.

What therefore the rich, the honoured or the great; what the wiſeſt, the philoſophers, of all ages endeavoured to find out and obtain; the pooreſt, meaneſt, or moſt illiterate followers of our adored Maſter, may, if in earneſt, claim as their right and title.

To be buffetted in this world; to ſuffer much miſery and tribulation, is, we find, indiſputably our portion: but, however overwhelmed in grief, or ſunk in affliction, a gleam of comfort breaks in, like a ray of light divine, upon our ſouls. We have not the great charter of our inheritance informs us we have not an high-prieſt, who cannot be touched with a feeling for our infirmities; who is inſenſible of our anguiſh, or deaf to our entreaties; but who was, in all points, in every tittle, tempted or tried as we are; ſeverely taſted every ſpecies of miſery; and is therefore able, ready and willing, to give to every one who ſeriouſly aſks that peace which the world never could nor ever will be able to afford.

Such of you therefore as are in poſſeſſion of this ineſtimable treaſure; ſuch of you as can look up with humble confidence and ſtrong faith to the Divine Author of your ſalvation, feel yourſelves at peace within, live a life of faith, contrition and repentance, and find great reaſon to joy or rejoice in the God of your redemption.

Who-

Whoever enjoys this precious bleſſing, knows too well the value not to give his Saviour thanks, and render up all his affections to this great meſſenger of peace.

You have felt, no doubt, the various ſhocks of life; the giddy and fantaſtic whirls, perhaps, of fortune; the louring frowns of ill, or the ſharp pangs of venomous diſeaſe: theſe are deſigned as kind inſtructors. Bred in this ſchool, we are by experiment taught to feel, that in the world we muſt ſuffer tribulation; but you have alſo felt, that, beſet with difficulties or diſtreſs, ſtill in Chriſt Jeſus is there abundant peace.

What though the thunder roars, the frame of nature cracks, creation rocks or ſhakes again, and flaming fire devours the world; nay, what though the trumpet ſounds, the dead awake, or hell, wide-opening its tremendous jaws, loud yawns a groan that echoes through the univerſe. What though more than this ſhould happen; your hearts are fortified with peace divine; the blood of Chriſt has ſilenced any accuſations of conſcience; reconciled unto God by your Saviour's merits; cleanſed from all iniquity: the ruins of ten thouſand worlds

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can never ſeparate you from your gracious interceſſor.

This is the end of that peace which gives us, even in this life, a ſerene ſmile at heart.

Let therefore none of us remain any longer ſtrangers to ſo great, ſo glorious a privilege: let us earneſtly apply to God for pardon, pity or forgiveneſs, as well as peace, ſupport or comfort, under every affliction: let us deem it an honour that we are permitted to pay him adoration.

Let us make a tender of our hearts and affections, all we have, or all we are: let us, without wavering, be truly in earneſt.

Without this Author of peace, all is darkneſs, gloomy horror and deſpair.

A view of his gracious love to man clears up and enlivens the whole: we are no longer at a loſs to know why, in the world, we muſt ſuffer tribulation; becauſe it is filled with evil: why we ſhould bear theſe evils with a patient ſubmiſſion; becauſe

becauſe by prayer to him we always can have peace and ſupport.

We alſo know why we ſhould be well content, why we ſhould be ſerene, or of good cheer; becauſe the Almighty Saviour has ſo conquered, ſo overcome the world, that by the aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, whom he ſends, it never, unleſs we are perverſe, can hurt or do us any injury.

Convinced by experience and reflection, that the world is a bubble, time a ſmall point, and eternity our all, let us fly for repoſe to the great Emanuel, patiently wait the arrival of that awful hour, when by his mercy, we may hope to enjoy peace, reſt and quietneſs for ever.

because by prayer to him we always can have peace and support.

We also know why we should be well content, why we should be serene, or of good cheer; because the Almighty Saviour has to conquered, to overcome the world, that by the affiftance of the Holy Ghoft, whom he fends, it never, unlefs we are perverfe, can hurt or do us any injury.

Convinced by experience and reflection, that the world is a bubble, time a fmall point, and eternity our all, let us fly for refpofe to the great Emanuel, patiently wait the arrival of that awful hour, when by his mercy, we may hope to enjoy peace, reft and quietnefs for ever.

SERMON XI.

The belief of a future reſurrection the beſt alleviation of preſent miſery.

BRITISH MUSEUM

SERMON XI.

St. John, Chap. xi. Ver. 25, 26.

I am the reſurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live; and whoſoever liveth and believeth in me, ſhall never die——Believeſt thou this?

A Certain man, called Lazarus, dying at Bethany, a ſmall city near Jeruſalem, afforded our Lord an opportunity of exerting the energy of the divine power he poſſeſſed, in recalling this perſon to life.

Meeting, as we may ſuppoſe, with many acts of kindneſs; having been treated by his family with a more than ordinary regard, Chriſt appears to have poſſeſſed a proportionate ſhare of affection, in return for each little office of good will he had received at their hands.

Being

Being therefore informed of the death of Lazarus, he ſeems determined that this, like all his other miracles, ſhould anſwer a twofold purpoſe, namely, the reſtoring a loſt brother to his dejected kindred; thereby making an ample return for any obligations they had laid him under, and giving the by-ſtanders a proof, not to be conteſted, of his eternal Godhead.

For this purpoſe, to avoid the invidious imputation of fraud or impoſture, he cautiouſly defers his journey to Bethany until the neceſſary ceremonies attending the burial of Lazarus were accompliſhed, until he was actually laid, and that for ſome days, in the ſilent grave, ſafe from any ſuſpicion of being in the leaſt acceſſary to a deſign he could not have been privy to.

Things being thus circumſtanced, Chriſt informs his followers of the event, and tells them alſo his intention to obey the meſſage the ſiſters of Lazarus had ſent, by going to Bethany.

Proceeding, therefore, on his journey, previous to his entrance into the town, Martha met him, and, in all the plaintive agony of grief, again told him

him of the dreadful cataſtrophe; dwelt much, we may ſuppoſe, on the merits of the deceaſed; enumerated the hardſhips of her caſe, but diſplayed, at the ſame time, a moſt exalted ſpecies of heroic faith, by imputing her brother's death entirely to the abſence of Chriſt—"If thou, ſaid ſhe, hadſt but been here, my deareſt brother never would have died."

She then diſcovers a gleam of hope, that his reſtoration is at leaſt poſſible; but, afraid to expreſs her real wiſhes, ſhe only intimates to Jeſus, that ſhe knows he can aſk nothing that God will not moſt readily grant.

To comfort her drooping ſpirits, Chriſt aſſures her that her brother ſhall riſe again. To this ſhe readily aſſents, but imagines he means only at the final judgment. At once to clear up all her doubts, our Lord pathetically exclaims, "I am myſelf both the reſurrection and the life: he that believeth in me only, though he were dead, ſhall live again; and whoſoever liveth and believeth in me, ſhall never die eternally."

The

The miracle, ſo nearly connected with the words of my text, is the greateſt proof, the moſt ample demonſtration of divinity a God could offer to the ſenſes of men.

From obſervation and experiment, we clearly perceive, that there is a regularity obſerved by all the mechanical powers in nature. 'Tis alſo an eaſy taſk to trace the boundaries of all ſuch agents. In ſhort, a man acquainted with the laws of motion, an attentive obſerver of the natural world, may almoſt point out to preciſion where mechaniſm ends, and the power of God takes place.

Hence are we enabled to form an idea of a miracle, which is a ſuſpenſion, controulment, or over-ruling any, or all of the powers of Nature, or conſtitution of things, as eſtabliſhed by God at the firſt formation of the world. It is making matter act contrary to the known laws of mechaniſm.

Thus it is of the eſſence and nature of fire to aſcend, of a ſtone, or heavy body, to deſcend toward the earth's center. And whatever be the cauſe that theſe bodies do thus act, no power can

ſo

ſo far controul, as to make them act contrary to this manner, but the Supreme, to whoſe almighty will all nature is obedient.

The greateſt proof, therefore, God could give, that he was the Author, conſequently ſuperior to Nature, was by making Nature act in direct oppoſition to herſelf. Accordingly, all the miracles wrought at Sinai were of this ſtamp. Fire deſcended, and loſt its burning quality. And the deſign of theſe wonders was to convince the Iſraelites, that there was a Being ſuperior to Matter, who gave ſettledlaws to Creation, and could, whenever he pleaſed, controul them, ſo as to make Nature act, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, very unnaturally.

This is one of the inherent and eſſential perfections of the Godhead. And it is, on all hands, granted, that he himſelf cannot communicate this perfection to any created being whatever: for, could he do this, that being would, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the word, be truly and properly God.

Well, therefore, convinced, that our Lord did controul the courſe of nature, it was ocular demonſtration

monſtration of his Godhead; and every act of power exerted in this manner were ſo many emanations of his divinity.

But though moſt of the miracles were done on particular occaſions, and to anſwer particular purpoſes; yet, as our Lord pronounced ſo confidently that the dead ſhould riſe, ſome proof of this was neceſſary to be given, in order to ſilence every objection that might be ſuggeſted.

When Chriſt declared, that he would himſelf, at the laſt day, call the dead to life, a man might reaſonably demand an evidence that ſuch a wonderful power actually reſided in him.

In the courſe, therefore, of God's providence, two inſtances of the kind happened during our Saviour's miniſtry; and they are recorded for our comfort, to afford us aſſurance that he is both able and willing to raiſe from the graves the bodies of thoſe who truly believe him to be the reſurrection of eternal life.

But, leſt it ſhould, in the caſe of others, be ſtill imagined, that a fraud was barely poſſible, we have

have the teſtimony of both eye and ear-witneſſes, that he actually raiſed his own body from the tomb. This was an earneſt of the manner in which the bodies of his faithful followers ſhould be releaſed from death. This was the cleareſt proof, that all power in heaven and earth was given to the humanity of Chriſt, in conſequence of his union with the Godhead: and it was the ſtrongeſt reaſon for his ſervants to believe that he had the ſame power over the machines of others they perceived him exerciſe upon his own.

The reſurrection of the dead, therefore, this miracle of all miracles, was wrought, to ſhew us that Chriſt had ability to perform what he ſo frequently declares he will certainly do.

But, as he was deſigned to be a healer of all our maladies, temporal and eternal; ſo is this tranſcendent act of his divine power a ſure ground of hope, a cordial, a viaticum, a ſpiritual conſolation under every miſery to which we, as men, are, in body and ſoul, hourly ſubject, by reaſon of the infirmity of our fleſh.

All

All things that in the leaſt contribute to our happineſs, either relate to the fortune, body, or mind of man.

The inſtant our competence, health, or peace, is broken in upon by any outward accident or deſign, the mind is immediately thrown into perturbation and diſorder.

The conſtitution of things, ſince the fall, is ſuch, that the major part of mankind are doomed to ſevere drudgery of mind, body, or perhaps both, before they can procure even a tolerable ſubſiſtence. And, what with the different views of men, what with the falſe notions of pre-eminence, founded upon pride; what with the great defects obſervable in every human ſyſtem of government; what with theſe, and other cauſes combined, the largeſt ſocieties moſt abound with objects cruſhed by Oppreſſion's iron rod, and griped by the pale hand of Penury and Diſtreſs.

To ſuch as theſe I am ſure 'tis joyful news to know that they may riſe to life eternal; that yet a little while, and all their wrongs ſhall be redreſſed, their ſhivering bodies clothed with immortality, their

their ſtreaming eyes exchange a tear for ſparkling joy; their face, the reſidence of meagre Want, ſhall ſhine ſuperior to the radiant ſun, and ſparkle with effulgent glory.

But, to avoid dwelling upon the worſt ſide of human nature, we may truly ſay, the life of all is darkened by Fortune's gloomy ſhades; and happy he on whom ſhe frowns not moſt ſeverely.

This is a world, where he who merits moſt receives the pooreſt wages.

When ſtruggling with misfortunes, anxious to ward off the impending blow that threatens our deſtruction, like a bird labouring to eſcape a net, the more eſſays we make, the more we are entangled. Under the preſſure of affliction, therefore, ariſing from a decay, or inſufficiency of our temporal eſtate; ſome conſolation is neceſſary to make us bear with greater eaſe the weight that's laid upon us.

This comfort can ariſe but from two ſources, our own hearts, or our friends advice.

Tell

Tell the world your diſmal ſtory, you'll gain their pity, but you'll loſe their love. But, to know that our Redeemer liveth, that we are haſtening to the illuſtrious court of our Eternal King; that afflictions are his meſſengers, ſent in ten thouſand ſhapes, on errands full of love, to mollify the ſoul, unlock Heaven's treaſure, make her truly wiſe, and teach her the dread importance of eternity: to know theſe things, and feel them in our hearts, this only can make us ſtand the ſhock of adverſe fortune, and behave, under each viſitation, with the ſerene dignity of men.

When health, life's choiceſt bleſſing, leaves us; when the languid pulſe foretells approaching diſſolution; when a livid paleneſs dwells upon the cheek; when the eye, that uſed to charm with magic ſweetneſs, glares diſtreſs, and ſinks into its ſocket; when racking pain diſtorts the feeble limbs; thus ſituated, the only comfort in our power is to know that we ſhall riſe again, becauſe we believe in him who is the life eternal.

Thus, when the body appears a horrid ſpectacle, ſtill can the mind ſay to its poor, emaciated companion, "Come, cheer up, my ſiſter. What though,

though, like the lilly fair, thy head does now decline; ſoon ſhall thy Saviour give new beauty to thy features; ſoon ſhalt thou flouriſh in immortal youth; ſoon burſt from the gloomy grave, all-glorious, like the body of thy deareſt Lord"

When anxious cares corrode the mind, when diſappointments prey upon the underſtanding, it finds no reſt until it looks beyond the grave, until it ſees in heaven a Man, the fellow of the Almighty, willing to aſſuage its grief, and lull to reſt each murmur of affliction. In ſhort, a glimpſe of Chriſt's goodneſs, to be diſplayed in the reſurrection of our bodies, is the moſt ſovereign antidote to every kind of diſtreſs.

Nor is it leſs neceſſary that we ſhould ſo believe this act of mercy, as to occaſion in us an anxiety to be of that number which ſhall riſe in order to be ſuperlatively bleſt.

Becauſe granting, what ſeldom happens, that no croſs accidents diſturb our peace, no outward ills moleſt us, no pain extorts a heart-felt ſigh; ſtill is there a ſhock of ſhocks we all muſt undergo. Nature, like an avaricious parent, lends her ſons a life, but makes them pay a heavy tax indeed.

Twice,

Twice, in the Goſpels, our Lord is ſaid to weep; once for the miſeries about to happen unto Jeruſalem; the ſecond time, at the grave of Lazarus, whom he was about to raiſe.

St. John ſeems to lay a particular ſtreſs upon this affecting circumſtance. The original word is very ſtrong, and means ſuch an effuſion of tears, as a mother might be ſuppoſed to ſhed for the loſs of an only child.

But wherefore did the Lord of Glory weep? Not, ſurely, becauſe his friend was dead, for he heard the news with great compoſure; nor yet becauſe he ſaw the grave; that would have been an unmanly weakneſs. Wherefore, then, did the world's Creator ſhed tears? To ſee the ſad, ſad havock, Sin had made; to ſee Creation's faireſt child laid level with the duſt; to ſee God's image made a putrid prey for worms to feaſt on. This it was that cauſed our God to groan with grief in ſpirit.

And, truly, 'tis a diſmal ſight.

Death, conſidered merely as a ſeparation of ſoul and body, is extremely dreadful. But, to look

look without fear or emotion upon the pale and livid wreck of mortality, is to be either more or leſs than man. Habit may ſometimes reconcile men in certain ſituations, and certain profeſſions, to the horrid view; but we all know, that much is to be overcome in the probationary ſtages; and the fear of death is ſo natural to man, that there is no perſon, however callous, in whom it will not at ſome gloomy and melancholy intervals be revived.

For this, the moſt awful of all human ſenſations, the only remedy is that "bleſſed hope of everlaſting life," which is given us by the miſſion of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and confirmed by the example exhibited in his own divine perſon, and the miracles which he wrought on others. This is the ſole conſolation amidſt the evils of life; this alone can enable us, with cheerfulneſs of mind, to behold the daily and great loſſes we ſuſtain in the deaths of thoſe whom we moſt honour and eſteem; or to encounter with any degree of courage our own diſſolution.

Wretched, beyond the power of language to deſcribe, is that man's caſe, whom a ſtupid and obſtinate principle of unbelief has deprived of

this divine conſolation!—Wretched is that man's lot, who, perhaps deprived of every earthly comfort, has no proſpect from futurity! To what a depth of woe is he precipitated! To what terrors is he not expoſed! "O, wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death! I thank God, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord." For he only can deliver us; and a firm belief in his goſpel can only adminiſter conſolation to our troubled ſouls.

Nor let thoſe, who, in the preſent tranſitory moment, may enjoy a deluſive proſperity, flatter themſelves with too confident a hope of its continuance.—It is the remark of one of the moſt exalted characters which the heathen world ever produced, that we can pronounce no man happy or proſperous, unleſs we knew his end. Who ſhall ſay what is yet before us? Who can tell, amidſt all the changes and chances of this mortal life, for what ſad viciſſitudes he may yet be reſerved? This uncertainty muſt ever cloud our moſt brilliant proſpects; and he who is for the preſent moment the moſt ſucceſsful in life, will have moſt to dread from a change. It was therefore with great reaſon that our Divine Teacher cautioned his diſciples, "not to love the world, neither

neither the things of the world." There is in truth but little in it, of which a good man can be enamoured. Diſſipation, luxury, treachery, fraud, villainy, oppreſſion, all the various ſhapes and forms of ſin, preſent themſelves to our view, whichever way we turn. The tempter is perhaps at this inſtant laying his ſnares for the moſt confident among us; and "let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall."

In this maze of error, doubt, and perplexity, on what ſhall we lay hold? On what rock ſhall we reſt the anchor of our hope and our ſalvation? On what ſhall we depend, but on him, who for us men, and for our ſalvation, came down from heaven, that he might make us the heirs of everlaſting life, and redeem us from the horrors of an eternal death?

That power, which by the breath of his lips raiſed the beloved Lazarus from the dead, is ſtill the ſame; and, bleſſed be God! ſhall be exerted for our final happineſs, if we but walk in his ways, and keep his commandments, to do them.

This conſideration only can conſole us in all diſappointments, ſupport us under every cala-

mity, prepare us for every change! This alone can raiſe us above temptation, can render us ſuperior to the bribes, the threatenings, the perſecution, of a corrupt and unjuſt world. This alone can guide our ſteps through this vale of miſery and tears in the paths which conduct to our peace, and which terminate in a glorious immortality.

Bleſſed thought! divine conſolation! conceived in the boſom of that mercy which called us into being, and redeemed us from everlaſting perdition, be thou ever preſent to our minds, be thou ever impreſſed upon our hearts! Weak, impotent, ſinful creatures, as we are, do thou, Lord, look down with pity on our manifold offences; do thou blot out, from the page of thy eternal juſtice, the errors and the offences of thy poor, fallible, and unſteady creatures, and have *mercy upon us, miſerable ſinners!* In thoſe difficulties and trials, to which it may pleaſe thy infinite wiſdom to ſubmit us, give us comfort and ſure confidence in thee! Preſerve us from the danger of the enemy; and when the period arrives when we ſhall part hence, and be no more ſeen, let that benignant love which reſtored from the darkneſs of the tomb him "who had been dead four days,"

5 JY61

call

call us again to life and happineſs; and may our ſouls be cheered with the exhllarating invitation—Come, ye repenting ſinners, come, ye loſt ſheep, come, ye pardoned prodigals, be reſtored to the boſom and the peace of your all-merciful Father, and bleſs for ever that unſpeakable goodneſs which calls you to enter into and partake of the joy of your Lord!

FINIS.

5 JY61